

The Fullness of God and Man

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Paul's prayer for his readers in Ephesians 3:13–19 is that they may be filled *with* (*ESV, REB, NRSV*) or *to* 'all the fullness of God' (*ASV, NIV*). As we shall see, the fullness of God and the fullness of Man are not only important but indispensable to all divine and human being. There is also a fullness of creation which is linked with God and Man and their fullness which we will discuss in later studies. For the moment we state that God has His own fullness of Himself and Man has his essential fullness of or from God.

In the series we are undertaking—'The Fullness of God and Man'—there can be no better starting point than Ephesians 3:13–19:

So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Surely the obvious meaning of this passage is that Paul's prayer to the Father is that He will, out of His great glory, strengthen through His Spirit the inner man of each person so that Christ may dwell in the hearts of all members of the church, by faith. Thus having come to the point of being rooted deeply as in a strong tree, and based as in a house with a good foundation they may truly know how Christ loves them. Knowing the dimensions of this love of Christ—a love beyond the total grasp of humans—they will thus be filled unto all the fullness of God Himself. This may sound a bit matter-of-fact, and scarcely what Paul is about. Even so, if this is a correct interpretation of the passage then Paul is not calling for only an intellectual understanding of the matter he has stated but a personal, dynamic understanding of the love of Christ, in fact a happening of it to the heart and mind of the persons for whom he is praying. Having apprehension or acquiring of this love of Christ rather than cognitive comprehension, as such,¹ something of great power happens in the 'inner man' or 'inward man' (Ps. 1:2; Rom. 7:22)—that core person who relates to God and will go on into eternity and its given immortality. This, then, is the knowing of Christ's love to us, by which (*hina*, so that) we will be filled *unto* all the fullness of God. Paul makes it clear that it is firstly to have Christ dwell in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in order to know personally and deeply the love of Christ which in itself superabounds human comprehension. This seems to be a paradox in apprehending the incomprehensible love of Christ. Yet we can clearly see this love so that as we come to know this is unknowable then we are being filled unto all God's fullness. It is not

¹ The verb used here is *katalambano*, the same as is used in John 1:5 'the darkness did not comprehend it', i.e. 'did not overcome the light'. In Ephesians 3:18 'comprehend' means 'fully grasping'.

that we open up and receive all God's fullness and henceforward contain all that fullness, but that we are being filled to all fullness as we proceed towards the *telos* of God.

Yes, but how matter-of-fact my description of the way to be filled with the fullness of God sounds when put into these words, this black print on white paper! Even as one writes, the words come by the Spirit to energise a hitherto self-centred man—'the Son of God, who *loved* me and gave himself for me!' '[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord', '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'! When we remember 'Christ *loved* us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' then we linger over these beautiful words, remembering that in fact he was hated by many in Israel—'He came unto his own, and his own received him not'. Steadily, ruthlessly they opposed him to the end and at the end there was the snarling, hysterical mob, the unrelenting and hard-grained religious priests and others, and he who was appointed a king, *the* King of God, who was seen as a blasphemer and a deceiver. His fierce battle in Gethsemane was over the sins of the world and the bearing of them. In the face of fallen angelic and demonic powers he fought the battle for me which released me from them, and from deadly death—deadly because of my sins which warranted the hot blast of God's fury against me. All this I could not know to be love until the Holy Spirit came and opened my eyes by a brilliant revelation to that fact and reality of Christ's love. Now that love banishes my dread of his Father and so strong is it that it opens the door of my heart so that the Good Shepherd, the Son of God, enters my heart and fills it with the love that he has always had towards me, and which now responds to his every moment and movement within me—love flowing as a strong river, flooding all of me in every nook and cranny and, behold! it is God's fullness itself flowing into me, transforming a hardened old sinner, even to making him weep before the vast unknowable love of the Son. What is incomprehensible he knows! What he knows is incomprehensible.

A. Skevington Wood in his commentary on Ephesians quotes Theophylact, 'But even though the love of Christ surpasses human knowledge, yet you shall know it if you have Christ dwelling in you'.² This is precisely Paul's point in praying that Christ by the power of the Spirit and the faith of the believer shall dwell in that person. Then it is not only a Christ who has been known by the work he has done—'The Son of God who gave himself for me'—but the Son who lives in every part of me and is acting out his works of love in every part of my life for 'Christ . . . lives [within] me'. I know him in all these actions for they are the love-actions of the crucified, risen, ascended and reigning Christ whose love is over all, and in all the universe. They also reveal the love of God the Father so that the roots grow more deeply as the time passes, and the foundation more stout and dependable as the crises come. Let us note at this point that 'being rooted and grounded in love' in Paul's statement implies an imperative to grow our roots into love, and build the foundations of it. It does not just happen! One becomes—along with all saints—to know dimensionless dimensions of love. Being filled unto all God's fullness demands love-knowledge and love-experience in Christ. Only then do we know what is unknowable! This divine oxymoron! How powerful a thing it is to have Christ living in us personally and corporately! It is together 'with all the saints' that we come to know Christ's love. In this

² 'Ephesians', in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1978, p. 52.

way love is ever living, stimulating to love on the principle John nominates, 'We love because he first loved us'. At the same time we need the Spirit to show that all he did was done in love.

When we read through the synoptic Gospels there is little said about Christ's love but we have not understood these writings unless we see they are about his love for people. How else can they be interpreted? In John's Gospel Jesus speaks more concerning love. In John 15:9, 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you'. He then commands them to abide in his love. This takes us close to Ephesians 3:14–19. The test that they are in his love is that they obey his commandments and indeed he says that if they obey his commandments the Father and he will take up their dwelling in them. Twice he has commanded them to love one another. The point of this seeming discursus is they cannot know the love of Christ and not be deeply drawn to love him and his Father as also to love one another. So, then, we who do not know love for Christ, the Father and others cannot know—as yet—Christ's love. This is not to say that firstly we must love Christ and the Father. In this matter John's principle still stands: 'We love because he first loved us'. Paul's words are to be noted: 'If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed' (1 Cor. 16:22). In Ephesians 6:24 (*ESV*), 'Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible'. It is obvious that there can be impure love—love corruptible! We are often warned against imitation love in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; cf. 1 Cor. 13:1–3). The usefulness of this present paragraph of Ephesians 3:13–19 is that it relates to 'the fullness of God' which comes to us through knowing the boundless love of Christ.

In Ephesians 1:23 the church as Christ's body has already been given the fullness of Christ. Even so, it is not primarily a fullness that we use. It is a fullness that we are, and are so in action. As his body, and by means of ministry granted to it in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors teachers and others, Christ is 'filling all things', i.e. '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'. Christ gives his fullness to his body yet it is he who 'fills all in all' by means of that body. In Ephesians 3:18–19 it is Christ's *love* we must comprehend or apprehend (make it our own) and in 4:13 it is him as the Son of God we must comprehend, i.e. know by making it our own through the Spirit. By this living knowledge we are filled unto all the fullness of God and whilst not *containing* that fullness we are ever being filled, never wholly and finally replete but then ever being filled. Another way of understanding this is by our being renewed from the state of fallenness and emptiness, into the new or restored image of God. This means that the image of God is ever being renewed and restored in us as we are shown in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:23–24, and Colossians 3:9–11. Here we put forth the suggestion which we will later pursue, that newly created Man in the image of God was, *as a creature*, filled unto all God's fullness. That was all the fullness he needed to have whilst not having fallen into sin. What we might call the significant elements of God's grace and salvation were not called upon or given to Man. Only do promises come to him when he has fallen, i.e. promises of salvation.

The fullness of God of which we are speaking we see in Colossians 1:19 was pleased to dwell in Christ and was there, through Christ, 'to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross'. Those who are in union with Christ are his body, are his members, now possessing *in him* the divine fullness because they are one with him in his cross, his death, his

resurrection, his ascension and his reigning. In Colossians 2:6–8 Paul warns these members of Christ against anything not according to Christ such as elemental powers, philosophy and human traditions, 'for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' and 'you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority'. He is really saying that 'the fullness' offered by the heretics and others is really an emptiness. It lacks ontological substantiality. At the same time Paul is showing us true fullness: that fullness is the truth of God and results in true being and living. Our conclusion is that the fullness of God dwelled—and dwells—in Christ, and that in union with him we come to share in that fullness. So, then, it is from knowing the Son of God (Eph. 4:13) and thus knowing Christ's incomprehensible love (Eph. 3:17–19), that we are filled *unto* all the fullness of God. Without knowing Christ we cannot be filled unto all the fullness of God. Without Christ dwelling in our hearts by our faith and the Holy Spirit we cannot know his love: only by knowing his love are we filled unto all the fullness of God.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul says, 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death'. Knowing Christ is essential to having his fullness, and Paul who already knows Christ so well, desires to know him beyond what he knows he knows of him and out of which he will be filled unto all the fullness of God. He has said in Philippians 3:8, 'Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.³ For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ'. In Philippians 3:10 he wants to *know* yet more of Christ and in 3:12–16 he has not yet made all of Christ his own, but presses on to accomplish this. This is good advice to us:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

No one who reads the New Testament can avoid facing the fact that the 'old' is to be seen as finished and is not of Christ. Only the 'new' is substantial. Now a believer has to walk in newness of life, according to what he has learned of Christ, and in all this he is being filled unto the fullness of God. So Ephesians 5:18 says, 'And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit', or as it can also be translated, 'be filled by the Spirit', i.e. 'be filled unto all the fullness of God' as in Ephesians 3:19, although an imperative is not used in this latter passage.

What, then, is the *fullness* of God? Chrysostom said, 'The fullness of God is that excellence of which God Himself is full'. God is God and His fullness is Himself. He alone has deity and as 1 Timothy 6:15–16 puts it: 'and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.' Although in

³ In Ephesians 3:14–19 Paul says specifically that it is in knowing Christ's *love* that he is filled unto all God's fullness. It may well be that all Christ's fullness is in his love, yet we know that when coming to know Christ we come to know him as Creator of the ages, Word of God, Son of God, Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, King of the Kingdom of God, Ruler of Kings on the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords. Paul's wanting to know Christ should be our wanting, also, so we should see all of his work is in love and is the active love by which he fulfils the will of God. Who, yet, has fully apprehended this marvellous Christ?

2 Peter 1:3–4:

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

it speaks of becoming partakers of the divine nature, yet that does not mean we will ever have divine nature ourselves. It means we will share in who God is and what He does but not in what He is as some theologians have stated, i.e. 'participators in His very substance'. This is impossible. What is called 'theosis' is what we will be at the 'telos', i.e. all that a human inhabited by God can be, nothing less than complete, perfect, holy, sanctified and full of glory. The term 'fullness' in the New Testament is *pleroma*, and there is the *pleroma* of God and the *pleroma* of Man. The *pleroma* of Man is full only from the *pleroma* of God. That is why we must first come to know God through Christ.

In other words Man will have the fullness of being and action for which God created him. He will be fully in the image of God, showing forth God's glory in that capacity. Man, then, will not be God, or *as* God, but only *like* God. Wholly inhabited by God (cf. John 14:23), God's fullness will enable Man to have his fullness as a human.

THE MATTER, GENERALLY, OF THE FULLNESS

It is evident that many human beings do not live in the fullness of God. We are going to assume that the first couple in their innocency of life knew God's fullness which, as we have seen, comes through knowing His love and responding to it. The creating of Man was very much a love work, but the couple were blinded to this when the serpent told them they could become as God were they to have their eyes opened by eating of the forbidden tree. In this way the story of God's love of Man was distorted. Of course people of faith always knew the truth but the human race needed the gospel of Genesis 3:15 (often called 'the proto-evangel') and that as preached to Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:8; Gen. 11:3). So it has taken millennia for God's arrival at that fullness of time (Gal. 4:4) in which the human race could now come to know the fullness of God. We mean that there has been a sea-change in all things through the coming of Christ and the advent, also, of the Spirit. These things we will look at more closely as our study proceeds.

THE FULLNESS OF GOD IN CREATION

Psalm 24:1–2 says, 'The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers'. Creation has its fullness which came from the Creator. The mention of blessing in Genesis 1:21 and 22 tells us the functional nature of all He created, but it also indicates the goodness of creation: 'And God saw that it was good', and His blessing of the birds and sea creatures tell us that His blessing was given so that they could swarm and multiply and that that was 'good', i.e. functional and of benefit to all creation. When Man was created—male and female—then he was created to have

dominion over all creatures and was: (i) to subdue the earth; and (ii) to reign over it. All creatures other than Man came into being with 'Let us make . . .', and whereas this statement too was made regarding all aspects of creation, yet Man was the only creature made in the image of God and the only one into whom God breathed to make him a living being. If we follow the description of chapter 1 of Genesis then we see that God's sight of the finished creation brought the Divine conclusion that everything 'was very good'. That meant that creation had its fullness in that it was a completed functional whole with all its parts being essential for its intended operation. If we will to do so we can say that it was out of His fullness⁴ that God created so that Man had his fullness and the creation under his leadership had its essential fullness. All things were dependent upon God, i.e. derived their fullness from Him.

It was essential that all things remain in harmony with the Creator, and that Man as the ruler of creation rule to the harmony and wellbeing of all creatures. This is inferred by the statement that Man was in the image of God and so reflected all God's fullness. Theologically we would say that Man was to reflect in action all the properties which God has or is, such as holiness, righteousness, goodness, truth and love. This would ensure the created harmony—all things exhibiting the goodness of the Creator. 'Good' is doing all things in the will of God and 'bad' or 'evil' is in refusing to do the will of God. It is obvious why God's fullness cannot be experienced by Man in the latter case.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FILLING

In Genesis 2:7 it is said that God breathed into Man the breath of life. He was then sufflated, breath animating him into life, i.e. he was now a 'living being'. God's breathing into him meant he had his fullness of life from the Creator. We can make no assumptions about God's breathing—if He does breathe—but we can say He gave to Man what was needed for Man's fullness, *as a Man*. So, then, the fullness of Man depends upon the fullness of God and how God relates to Man, whereas God's fullness is innate to Him. Man must remain in union with God in order to have the fullness which pertains to Man in the creation which was at the beginning.

There is also a fullness of creation indicated to us in Romans 8:18–25. In this passage creation—even momentarily excluding Man for the purposes of understanding it—seems to have a place in the dynamics of being which is not that depicted romantically by animation of animals, trees etc. as today we have after the mind of Walt Disney, where animals have human minds, humours and aspirations. As against this in his book *Trinity and Society*, Boff describes *perichoresis* after he has spoken of the Three Persons being one together in communion:

The term *perichoresis* once was used in two different fields of theology: that having to do with the relationship between God and matter and that having to do with the relationship of the two natures in Christ. God is said to penetrate all the matter of creation; God is in the world; God's presence, actions and providence pervade the world. But there is no reciprocity, since matter is not capable of responding consciously to God and of being in God. This *perichoresis* is not complete. In Jesus Christ two natures, human and divine, co-exist, united in the Person of the Son. This union is so

⁴ God's fullness is not the substance of Himself but what He as substantial does as the Triune God in both His immanent and economic actions. For example in Ephesians 3:16–19 it is by knowing Christ's love that we come to be filled with God's fullness. We are filled from God and by God but we do not receive the substance (*ousia*) of God though it is in our human substance that we are filled.

deep that the properties of one nature are interchangeable with those of the other. So it is correct to say: 'God appeared on earth, suffered and died,' or 'This man is uncreated and eternal.' The two natures interpenetrate each other, without fusion or confusion; divine nature takes on human nature, each occupying the totality of the same divine hypostasis and so producing a true perichoresis (also referred to as *communicatio idiomatum*).⁵

It would take more research before we agreed with Boff that 'there is no reciprocity, since matter is not capable of responding consciously to God and of being in God', for creation is often presented with the trees and hills singing and clapping their hands as they worship God, and when it is said, 'The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof', it shows a relationship with God and Man which is not simply romantic. Also Romans 8:17–22 sees creation—which includes Man—liberated from its bondage to futility and corruption to share in 'the glory of the liberty of the children of God'. For the present we will not delve into this. We do, however, need to see that God blessed creation so that it could pursue its allotted course as, for example, set out in Genesis 1:21–22 and 9:1ff. and recognise that similar blessing was given to Man for his allotted course. In one sense both can be said to be 'filled'. Each had its own fullness. Creation is seen to be attended by God in Psalm 104:24–30:

O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
the earth is full of thy creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide
which teems with things innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it.
These all look to thee,
to give them their food in due season.
When thou givest to them, they gather it up;
when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things.
When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;
when thou takest away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the ground.'

To complete the picture: there were three blessings given, the two we have mentioned: i.e. the created beings and the man and the woman in their union and vocation; and then the third in Genesis 2:1–3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

The whole work of creation has thus been blessed and the seventh day was set to be the day of rest and blessing for all creation. Not only was rest prescribed for Man but for all other things, for creation was perfect. Nor was the seventh day simply primal in history for it was left open for ever, and it related to Eden which Man was to use to fill the earth, i.e. to Edenise all the earth as he was king over it. In Psalms 103 and 104 the psalmists are called to bless God, for blessing God is the response to His blessing

⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Burns & Oates, Tunbridge Wells, 1992, p. 136.

creation. It is noteworthy that in Genesis 9:1–7 Man is again blessed by God, following the Flood, and told to 'Be fruitful and multiply and teem on the earth and multiply in it'. Sadly enough the creatures now have fear of Man, whereas in the first commission (Gen. 1:28–30) this was not the case. At the same time God makes His everlasting covenant with Man and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. This accentuates the original blessing God gave to all things and from which they derived their fullness for their fulfilment of allotted vocation.

To this point we see the work of God in creation and how it is that out of His fullness He gives all things their fullness and Man his fullness. There is nothing that He has created which He does not bless and so seal its fullness. Also the gifts of God are without recall so that Man does not lose his responsibility to be as he was created to be, to be ontological—if we may use that term—in order to follow the vocation given to him and to live in the light of the threefold blessing of the creation: of marriage and fecundity, and of the sabbath rest. When Man alienated himself from God he has ever had to contend with the demands for which he was structured to fulfil. He has insisted on going his own way and not God's way. This is what makes his lot so difficult as we will further see.

Before leaving our rather brief treatment of God as Creator, Man as created along with the entire creation, Man and creation destined for eternal fullness out of God's fullness, we now need to appraise the situation in which Man was placed when created.⁶ We need to see the God who is Triune, and how and why it is that creation came into being. We have seen the principle in Ephesians 3:14–19 that when we know the love of Christ it is then we are filled unto all the fullness of God. If we start there as does the Epistle to the Hebrews then we see that all things were created by a Son.

THE LOSS OF FULLNESS

It is certain that Man lost human fullness at the Fall in Eden. Man was structured to be full by creation and blessing and this was the creation-gift of God. Nothing of contract was present, for behind all creation was the unilateral, everlasting covenant of God. Creation, we might say, was the gift of God. The warning against death was simple and clear, and contained no threat. Seemingly Man was not disturbed by the news God had given him. Man had what we might call 'freedom of choice'. In this sense he chose to believe he would have fullness in himself. He had been made full—as a human creature—to fulfil his vocation. His vocation was intended to be in God in the best perichoretic sense, i.e. God and Man were in communion. In that communion nothing was lacking for the first couple.

For a moment we might contemplate the wonder, beauty and security of creation. Peter in one of his letters says, in effect, 'You can trust your souls to a faithful creator'. This must mean that all that God created was very good (cf. Gen. 1:31) so that all which happened in it ought always to be 'very good'. It means also that there

⁶ My book *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997) could be helpful in showing the background of the everlasting covenant to the things of creation such as human vocation, i.e. the fulfilling of the mandate given to Man in Genesis 1:28–30, marriage as important to universal human living, and the power of the sabbath rest. Unfortunately I missed talking about the Kingdom of God which is inherent in Man subduing the earth and being king over it, the very matter which Christ came to fulfil because Man did not fulfil that part of the commission.

can be no flaw, no weakness will endanger the creation so that it can fail. Again, and principally, it means that whatever goal God has in view for the creation, i.e. His purpose in creating the universe, will be realised. Often in our theological reading of the Scriptures we fail to enter the story of God as it is written. Theologically we know that Eden was God's Paradise for Man but then we fail to see how amazing it was for Man to be created outside Eden, coming into true human being by God breathing into the clay form He had made, and then the sheer wonder of Man being placed in Eden—the special garden God had made for him to be his earthly paradise. The mandate or commission given to Man has to do with his being in Eden, for this was to be God's most beautiful and functional garden and to be the criterion for the world to be shaped as was that garden, both in its physical aspects but primarily in its perichoretic relationships between God and Man, God and creation, Man and creation. It will seem like speculation to say that Man realised he had been born for the noble task of bringing the creation under his control as God's royal steward, and working with Him for the successful climax of His plan for creation *as a faithful Creator*. Surely he understood this as he also understood the nature of God's threefold blessing. The reality of a fruitful world, the garden where all trees were good for food and pleasant to the eyes, where there was a tree of life and only one tree could bring death were they to eat of it. We conclude that practically Man must have sensed his great vocation, especially as he named the animals. His longings for a mate must have thrilled him beyond measure as his bride was made from his side. He may have been conscious of the meaning of that 'profound mystery' of which Paul later wrote in Ephesians 5:22–33. Certainly he was in the line of creating human epithalamiums for the beauty of marriage and true human love (cf. Gen. 2:18–25). He had no sense of loss, no lack of vocation, no loss of rest, no slavish fear of God or creation. To the contrary: Man as man and woman lived in the most beautiful love and peace. As I suggested, in order to understand the fullness of Man, we would have to have been there, in the story, sensing the marvellous vocation of being a worker and steward in God's plan. Man was without dread, fear, and felt-guilt. Little did he know how everything would change for him in his moment of ignoring the word of God and hearing and obeying the word of the serpent in Eden.

If somehow we can enter the story which is the story of God and the human race we certainly can empathise with what happened with the advent of the serpent. The serpent as he was later called 'that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world . . . who accuses them [the brethren] day and night before our God' (Rev. 12:9–10), seduced the woman and convinced the man that he would gain even more than he had, by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. How quickly everything changed! How rapidly the fullness of God diminished! On the principle that Man's creational fullness comes from his knowledge of God in the inner man,⁷ Man was to live exhibiting those properties of God which are holiness, righteousness, truthfulness, goodness and love. We can say that these properties which governed all original Man's living diminished down to nothing, or—as some would have it—reversed, so that self-holiness, self-righteousness, self-truthfulness, self-goodness and self-love became the expression of the fallen Man's 'fullness'. They were in fact 'emptiness' as nothing of true life can

⁷ In Ephesians 3:14–19 a person is filled with the fullness of God because he or she knows the love of Christ, so at creation Man received the fullness of God by knowing the love of God. This at creation constituted being in the image of God and living as the reflection of God, but it was a state Man lost. This brought him under the domination of Satan and all evil.

originate with sinful Man. He refused God and so the commission given to him and he found he was not full as a human outside of God. He was given over to existential emptiness as he was given over to the curse.

All of this loss of fullness and the accompanying curse is not easy to describe. If we go immediately to Ephesians 3:14–19 and glory in knowing the love of Christ by which we are filled unto all the fullness of God then, and only then, can we grasp the horror of not being true persons in God. Moving from perichoretic communion with God to discovering the dread of nakedness, and even more the presence of God without that presence being welcome, and yet the absence of that presence being all the more terrifying in the presence of guilt, really defies human description though not human experience. The loss of communion with God is really the loss of true community, a point we are later to consider. Cain, though a murderer, had need of God to protect him, and feared being sent out from the face, i.e. the Presence, of God. This can be seen in Genesis 4:10–16. The matter of the break-out from the ontological society of God and Man, as we will see, has caused much pain, grief and hurt in human history. Not only have countless millions felt the impact of insane slaughter and genocide, but also all frightening forms of homicide—suicide, matricide, patricide, fratricide, deicide and the like. The tangled mass of relationships which has always constituted humanity has brought endless misery to our world. It is no wonder we seek antidotes to this pain and suffering and devise means of filling our emptiness.

MAN IS CREATED ONLY FOR FULLNESS

A well-known maxim is 'Nature abhors a vacuum'. It appears that Man abhors emptiness. If a man will not be filled 'unto all the fullness of God' he may seek anything to supply fullness, and often fullness of any kind. We have seen that 'the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof', so that creation has no innate emptiness. There was no emptiness to be abhorred. Romans 8:20 tells us that it was subjected to vanity (*mataioteti*) or futility, i.e. was prevented from fulfilling its true function, but tells us that it will one day come into its destiny or fullness. For Man there is fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord (Ps. 16:11), but all things out of God are vain or empty, i.e. *kenos*. Against *kenos*, 'the river of God is full of water' (Ps. 65:9) which is a beautiful statement. Indeed Psalm 65:9–13 could be seen as Adam in his state of innocency talking of Eden's fullness, if we may use a little imagination:

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it,
thou greatly enrichest it;
the river of God is full of water;
thou providest their grain,
for so thou hast prepared it.
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
Thou crownest the year with thy bounty;
the tracks of thy chariot drip with fatness.
The pastures of the wilderness drip,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.'

Psalm 46:4 says, 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High'. Jerusalem does not have this kind of river. It only has a small stream, but the idea of the river of God is seen in Scripture, in Eden (Gen. 2:8–14), in Ezekiel

47:1–12 and Revelation 22:1–5. It is always flowing in fullness. Likewise the Samaritan woman at the well is promised a fountain will spring up in her, doubtless quenching her thirst and filling her. No less is Christ represented as living bread and living water in John 6:35, whilst from Christ flows the fullness to those who drink of him and believe of him. Not only are they filled but also they flow over as rivers of living water. At this point we will not speak of Christ being filled with the Holy Spirit, nor those at Pentecost and others following them. Their fullness is evident and wonderful. We need, then, to show likewise the kinds of things that fill human beings when they reject God as ‘the fountain of living waters’ (Jer. 2:13; 17:13), when they are not ‘full of . . . wisdom’, ‘full of faith’, ‘full of grace and power’ (Acts 6:3, 5, 8) and ‘full of good works and acts of charity’ (Acts 9:36). Romans 1:29–32 shows the terrible results of rejecting the evidence of God in creation, and deliberately rejecting God Himself. The first step towards filling themselves with other than God was to devise their idols and worship them. True morality decayed into horrible forms of immorality and the end was that God gave them over to a debased mind to do what they ought not have done:

They were *filled* with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

‘They were filled’ is really horrific reportage. Again, unless we are in the story and not information seekers we will pass over it like the weary and cynical watchers we are of the world scene on our TVs. It is a strong echo of Ecclesiastes 9:3, ‘This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all; also the hearts of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.’ It also reminds us of 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (ASV):

. . . as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine.

Surely it is linked with the fallen human heart, for as Jesus said:

What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a man (Mark 7:20–23).

There are of course other things which can fill the heart which seem like intrusions upon persons of faith, and not from sin. Job speaks of ‘so I am allotted months of *emptiness*, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. When I lie down I say, “When shall I arise?” But the night is long, and I am *full of tossing* till the dawn’ (Job 7:3–4). He observes, ‘Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and *full of trouble*. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not’ (Job 14:1–2). The psalmist also has the problem, ‘For my soul is *full of troubles*, and my life draws near to Sheol’ (Ps. 88:3). All of these ‘fullnesses’ are known to us and we

wonder what will be their solution, and whether it is simply that we need the fullness of God to deal with them.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED AND WAY FOR BEING FILLED UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Our study series is not being set forth as a distinterested enquiry into the fullnesses Man may know in his lifetime, but for the dynamic outcome of truth which can bring him to be filled unto all the fullness of God. Also as how it is that men can become filled unto all the fullness of evil. For example, is Satan the counterpart of God in every way and is it possible that he can seduce men and women to 'love' him? Does he thus fill persons unto all his 'fullness'? Does this fully explain the horrors Man has committed in his time? Are there evil 'blessings' and 'cursings' given by the kingdom of darkness to oppose God's plan of grace? Is there a place and a means by which all Christians may and should become filled unto all God's fullness or do we have to wait for special times and seasons in order to proclaim the Kingdom, suffer in its service and see the Kingdom come in power in this most important, present eschaton?

These questions mean our studies can be of immense value, but in order for this to be so we will need to be in the story—as we have said—and get the whole mind of the Scriptures. For us personally it will mean that we are being filled unto all God's fullness. We can do no better than close with Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3:20–21, 'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.'

THE FULLNESS OF GOD AND MAN

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Paul's prayer for his readers in Ephesians 3:13–19 is that they may be filled *with* (*ESV, REB, NRSV*) or *to* 'all the fullness of God' (*ASV, NIV*). As we shall see, the fullness of God and the fullness of Man are not only important but indispensable to all divine and human being. There is also a fullness of creation which is linked with God and Man and their fullness which we will discuss in later studies. For the moment we state that God has His own fullness of Himself and Man has his essential fullness of or from God.

In the series we are undertaking—'The Fullness of God and Man'—there can be no better starting point than Ephesians 3:13–19:

So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Surely the obvious meaning of this passage is that Paul's prayer to the Father is that He will, out of His great glory, strengthen through His Spirit the inner man of each person so that Christ may dwell in the hearts of all members of the church, by faith. Thus having come to the point of being rooted deeply as in a strong tree, and based as in a house with a good foundation they may truly know how Christ loves them. Knowing the dimensions of this love of Christ—a love beyond the total grasp of humans—they will thus be filled unto all the fullness of God Himself. This may sound a bit matter-of-fact, and scarcely what Paul is about. Even so, if this is a correct interpretation of the passage then Paul is not calling for only an intellectual understanding of the matter he has stated but a personal, dynamic understanding of the love of Christ, in fact a happening of it to the heart and mind of the persons for whom he is praying. Having apprehension or acquiring of this love of Christ rather than cognitive comprehension, as such,¹ something of great power happens in the 'inner man' or 'inward man' (Ps. 1:2; Rom. 7:22)—that core person who relates to God and will go on into eternity and its given immortality. This, then, is the knowing of Christ's love to us, by which (*hina*, so that) we will be filled *unto* all the fullness of God. Paul makes it clear that it is firstly to have Christ dwell in our hearts by the Holy Spirit in order to know personally and deeply the love of Christ which in itself superabounds human comprehension. This seems to be a paradox in apprehending the incomprehensible love of Christ. Yet we can clearly see this love so that as we come to know this is unknowable then we are being filled unto all God's fullness. It is not

¹ The verb used here is *katalambano*, the same as is used in John 1:5 'the darkness did not comprehend it', i.e. 'did not overcome the light'. In Ephesians 3:18 'comprehend' means 'fully grasping'.

that we open up and receive all God's fullness and henceforward contain all that fullness, but that we are being filled to all fullness as we proceed towards the *telos* of God.

Yes, but how matter-of-fact my description of the way to be filled with the fullness of God sounds when put into these words, this black print on white paper! Even as one writes, the words come by the Spirit to energise a hitherto self-centred man—'the Son of God, who *loved* me and gave himself for me!' '[nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord', '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'! When we remember 'Christ *loved* us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' then we linger over these beautiful words, remembering that in fact he was hated by many in Israel—'He came unto his own, and his own received him not'. Steadily, ruthlessly they opposed him to the end and at the end there was the snarling, hysterical mob, the unrelenting and hard-grained religious priests and others, and he who was appointed a king, *the* King of God, who was seen as a blasphemer and a deceiver. His fierce battle in Gethsemane was over the sins of the world and the bearing of them. In the face of fallen angelic and demonic powers he fought the battle for me which released me from them, and from deadly death—deadly because of my sins which warranted the hot blast of God's fury against me. All this I could not know to be love until the Holy Spirit came and opened my eyes by a brilliant revelation to that fact and reality of Christ's love. Now that love banishes my dread of his Father and so strong is it that it opens the door of my heart so that the Good Shepherd, the Son of God, enters my heart and fills it with the love that he has always had towards me, and which now responds to his every moment and movement within me—love flowing as a strong river, flooding all of me in every nook and cranny and, behold! it is God's fullness itself flowing into me, transforming a hardened old sinner, even to making him weep before the vast unknowable love of the Son. What is incomprehensible he knows! What he knows is incomprehensible.

A. Skevington Wood in his commentary on Ephesians quotes Theophylact, 'But even though the love of Christ surpasses human knowledge, yet you shall know it if you have Christ dwelling in you'.² This is precisely Paul's point in praying that Christ by the power of the Spirit and the faith of the believer shall dwell in that person. Then it is not only a Christ who has been known by the work he has done—'The Son of God who gave himself for me'—but the Son who lives in every part of me and is acting out his works of love in every part of my life for 'Christ . . . lives [within] me'. I know him in all these actions for they are the love-actions of the crucified, risen, ascended and reigning Christ whose love is over all, and in all the universe. They also reveal the love of God the Father so that the roots grow more deeply as the time passes, and the foundation more stout and dependable as the crises come. Let us note at this point that 'being rooted and grounded in love' in Paul's statement implies an imperative to grow our roots into love, and build the foundations of it. It does not just happen! One becomes—along with all saints—to know dimensionless dimensions of love. Being filled unto all God's fullness demands love-knowledge and love-experience in Christ. Only then do we know what is unknowable! This divine oxymoron! How powerful a thing it is to have Christ living in us personally and corporately! It is together 'with all the saints' that we come to know Christ's love. In this

² 'Ephesians', in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 11, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1978, p. 52.

way love is ever living, stimulating to love on the principle John nominates, 'We love because he first loved us'. At the same time we need the Spirit to show that all he did was done in love.

When we read through the synoptic Gospels there is little said about Christ's love but we have not understood these writings unless we see they are about his love for people. How else can they be interpreted? In John's Gospel Jesus speaks more concerning love. In John 15:9, 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you'. He then commands them to abide in his love. This takes us close to Ephesians 3:14–19. The test that they are in his love is that they obey his commandments and indeed he says that if they obey his commandments the Father and he will take up their dwelling in them. Twice he has commanded them to love one another. The point of this seeming discursus is they cannot know the love of Christ and not be deeply drawn to love him and his Father as also to love one another. So, then, we who do not know love for Christ, the Father and others cannot know—as yet—Christ's love. This is not to say that firstly we must love Christ and the Father. In this matter John's principle still stands: 'We love because he first loved us'. Paul's words are to be noted: 'If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed' (1 Cor. 16:22). In Ephesians 6:24 (*ESV*), 'Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible'. It is obvious that there can be impure love—love corruptible! We are often warned against imitation love in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 12:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; cf. 1 Cor. 13:1–3). The usefulness of this present paragraph of Ephesians 3:13–19 is that it relates to 'the fullness of God' which comes to us through knowing the boundless love of Christ.

In Ephesians 1:23 the church as Christ's body has already been given the fullness of Christ. Even so, it is not primarily a fullness that we use. It is a fullness that we are, and are so in action. As his body, and by means of ministry granted to it in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors teachers and others, Christ is 'filling all things', i.e. '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'. Christ gives his fullness to his body yet it is he who 'fills all in all' by means of that body. In Ephesians 3:18–19 it is Christ's *love* we must comprehend or apprehend (make it our own) and in 4:13 it is him as the Son of God we must comprehend, i.e. know by making it our own through the Spirit. By this living knowledge we are filled unto all the fullness of God and whilst not *containing* that fullness we are ever being filled, never wholly and finally replete but then ever being filled. Another way of understanding this is by our being renewed from the state of fallenness and emptiness, into the new or restored image of God. This means that the image of God is ever being renewed and restored in us as we are shown in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Ephesians 4:23–24, and Colossians 3:9–11. Here we put forth the suggestion which we will later pursue, that newly created Man in the image of God was, *as a creature*, filled unto all God's fullness. That was all the fullness he needed to have whilst not having fallen into sin. What we might call the significant elements of God's grace and salvation were not called upon or given to Man. Only do promises come to him when he has fallen, i.e. promises of salvation.

The fullness of God of which we are speaking we see in Colossians 1:19 was pleased to dwell in Christ and was there, through Christ, 'to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross'. Those who are in union with Christ are his body, are his members, now possessing *in him* the divine fullness because they are one with him in his cross, his death, his

resurrection, his ascension and his reigning. In Colossians 2:6–8 Paul warns these members of Christ against anything not according to Christ such as elemental powers, philosophy and human traditions, 'for in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily' and 'you have been filled in him who is the head of all rule and authority'. He is really saying that 'the fullness' offered by the heretics and others is really an emptiness. It lacks ontological substantiality. At the same time Paul is showing us true fullness: that fullness is the truth of God and results in true being and living. Our conclusion is that the fullness of God dwelled—and dwells—in Christ, and that in union with him we come to share in that fullness. So, then, it is from knowing the Son of God (Eph. 4:13) and thus knowing Christ's incomprehensible love (Eph. 3:17–19), that we are filled *unto* all the fullness of God. Without knowing Christ we cannot be filled unto all the fullness of God. Without Christ dwelling in our hearts by our faith and the Holy Spirit we cannot know his love: only by knowing his love are we filled unto all the fullness of God.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul says, 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death'. Knowing Christ is essential to having his fullness, and Paul who already knows Christ so well, desires to know him beyond what he knows he knows of him and out of which he will be filled unto all the fullness of God. He has said in Philippians 3:8, 'Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.³ For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ'. In Philippians 3:10 he wants to *know* yet more of Christ and in 3:12–16 he has not yet made all of Christ his own, but presses on to accomplish this. This is good advice to us:

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

No one who reads the New Testament can avoid facing the fact that the 'old' is to be seen as finished and is not of Christ. Only the 'new' is substantial. Now a believer has to walk in newness of life, according to what he has learned of Christ, and in all this he is being filled unto the fullness of God. So Ephesians 5:18 says, 'And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit', or as it can also be translated, 'be filled by the Spirit', i.e. 'be filled unto all the fullness of God' as in Ephesians 3:19, although an imperative is not used in this latter passage.

What, then, is the *fullness* of God? Chrysostom said, 'The fullness of God is that excellence of which God Himself is full'. God is God and His fullness is Himself. He alone has deity and as 1 Timothy 6:15–16 puts it: 'and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see. To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.' Although in

³ In Ephesians 3:14–19 Paul says specifically that it is in knowing Christ's *love* that he is filled unto all God's fullness. It may well be that all Christ's fullness is in his love, yet we know that when coming to know Christ we come to know him as Creator of the ages, Word of God, Son of God, Redeemer, Saviour, Lord, King of the Kingdom of God, Ruler of Kings on the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords. Paul's wanting to know Christ should be our wanting, also, so we should see all of his work is in love and is the active love by which he fulfils the will of God. Who, yet, has fully apprehended this marvellous Christ?

2 Peter 1:3–4:

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

it speaks of becoming partakers of the divine nature, yet that does not mean we will ever have divine nature ourselves. It means we will share in who God is and what He does but not in what He is as some theologians have stated, i.e. 'participators in His very substance'. This is impossible. What is called 'theosis' is what we will be at the 'telos', i.e. all that a human inhabited by God can be, nothing less than complete, perfect, holy, sanctified and full of glory. The term 'fullness' in the New Testament is *pleroma*, and there is the *pleroma* of God and the *pleroma* of Man. The *pleroma* of Man is full only from the *pleroma* of God. That is why we must first come to know God through Christ.

In other words Man will have the fullness of being and action for which God created him. He will be fully in the image of God, showing forth God's glory in that capacity. Man, then, will not be God, or *as* God, but only *like* God. Wholly inhabited by God (cf. John 14:23), God's fullness will enable Man to have his fullness as a human.

THE MATTER, GENERALLY, OF THE FULLNESS

It is evident that many human beings do not live in the fullness of God. We are going to assume that the first couple in their innocency of life knew God's fullness which, as we have seen, comes through knowing His love and responding to it. The creating of Man was very much a love work, but the couple were blinded to this when the serpent told them they could become as God were they to have their eyes opened by eating of the forbidden tree. In this way the story of God's love of Man was distorted. Of course people of faith always knew the truth but the human race needed the gospel of Genesis 3:15 (often called 'the proto-evangel') and that as preached to Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:8; Gen. 11:3). So it has taken millennia for God's arrival at that fullness of time (Gal. 4:4) in which the human race could now come to know the fullness of God. We mean that there has been a sea-change in all things through the coming of Christ and the advent, also, of the Spirit. These things we will look at more closely as our study proceeds.

THE FULLNESS OF GOD IN CREATION

Psalm 24:1–2 says, 'The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein; for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers'. Creation has its fullness which came from the Creator. The mention of blessing in Genesis 1:21 and 22 tells us the functional nature of all He created, but it also indicates the goodness of creation: 'And God saw that it was good', and His blessing of the birds and sea creatures tell us that His blessing was given so that they could swarm and multiply and that that was 'good', i.e. functional and of benefit to all creation. When Man was created—male and female—then he was created to have

dominion over all creatures and was: (i) to subdue the earth; and (ii) to reign over it. All creatures other than Man came into being with 'Let us make . . .', and whereas this statement too was made regarding all aspects of creation, yet Man was the only creature made in the image of God and the only one into whom God breathed to make him a living being. If we follow the description of chapter 1 of Genesis then we see that God's sight of the finished creation brought the Divine conclusion that everything 'was very good'. That meant that creation had its fullness in that it was a completed functional whole with all its parts being essential for its intended operation. If we will to do so we can say that it was out of His fullness⁴ that God created so that Man had his fullness and the creation under his leadership had its essential fullness. All things were dependent upon God, i.e. derived their fullness from Him.

It was essential that all things remain in harmony with the Creator, and that Man as the ruler of creation rule to the harmony and wellbeing of all creatures. This is inferred by the statement that Man was in the image of God and so reflected all God's fullness. Theologically we would say that Man was to reflect in action all the properties which God has or is, such as holiness, righteousness, goodness, truth and love. This would ensure the created harmony—all things exhibiting the goodness of the Creator. 'Good' is doing all things in the will of God and 'bad' or 'evil' is in refusing to do the will of God. It is obvious why God's fullness cannot be experienced by Man in the latter case.

THE PRINCIPLE OF FILLING

In Genesis 2:7 it is said that God breathed into Man the breath of life. He was then sufflated, breath animating him into life, i.e. he was now a 'living being'. God's breathing into him meant he had his fullness of life from the Creator. We can make no assumptions about God's breathing—if He does breathe—but we can say He gave to Man what was needed for Man's fullness, *as a Man*. So, then, the fullness of Man depends upon the fullness of God and how God relates to Man, whereas God's fullness is innate to Him. Man must remain in union with God in order to have the fullness which pertains to Man in the creation which was at the beginning.

There is also a fullness of creation indicated to us in Romans 8:18–25. In this passage creation—even momentarily excluding Man for the purposes of understanding it—seems to have a place in the dynamics of being which is not that depicted romantically by animation of animals, trees etc. as today we have after the mind of Walt Disney, where animals have human minds, humours and aspirations. As against this in his book *Trinity and Society*, Boff describes *perichoresis* after he has spoken of the Three Persons being one together in communion:

The term *perichoresis* once was used in two different fields of theology: that having to do with the relationship between God and matter and that having to do with the relationship of the two natures in Christ. God is said to penetrate all the matter of creation; God is in the world; God's presence, actions and providence pervade the world. But there is no reciprocity, since matter is not capable of responding consciously to God and of being in God. This *perichoresis* is not complete. In Jesus Christ two natures, human and divine, co-exist, united in the Person of the Son. This union is so

⁴ God's fullness is not the substance of Himself but what He as substantial does as the Triune God in both His immanent and economic actions. For example in Ephesians 3:16–19 it is by knowing Christ's love that we come to be filled with God's fullness. We are filled from God and by God but we do not receive the substance (*ousia*) of God though it is in our human substance that we are filled.

deep that the properties of one nature are interchangeable with those of the other. So it is correct to say: 'God appeared on earth, suffered and died,' or 'This man is uncreated and eternal.' The two natures interpenetrate each other, without fusion or confusion; divine nature takes on human nature, each occupying the totality of the same divine hypostasis and so producing a true perichoresis (also referred to as *communicatio idiomatum*).⁵

It would take more research before we agreed with Boff that 'there is no reciprocity, since matter is not capable of responding consciously to God and of being in God', for creation is often presented with the trees and hills singing and clapping their hands as they worship God, and when it is said, 'The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof', it shows a relationship with God and Man which is not simply romantic. Also Romans 8:17–22 sees creation—which includes Man—liberated from its bondage to futility and corruption to share in 'the glory of the liberty of the children of God'. For the present we will not delve into this. We do, however, need to see that God blessed creation so that it could pursue its allotted course as, for example, set out in Genesis 1:21–22 and 9:1ff. and recognise that similar blessing was given to Man for his allotted course. In one sense both can be said to be 'filled'. Each had its own fullness. Creation is seen to be attended by God in Psalm 104:24–30:

O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
the earth is full of thy creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide
which teems with things innumerable,
living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
and Leviathan which thou didst form to sport in it.
These all look to thee,
to give them their food in due season.
When thou givest to them, they gather it up;
when thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good things.
When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;
when thou takest away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the ground.'

To complete the picture: there were three blessings given, the two we have mentioned: i.e. the created beings and the man and the woman in their union and vocation; and then the third in Genesis 2:1–3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

The whole work of creation has thus been blessed and the seventh day was set to be the day of rest and blessing for all creation. Not only was rest prescribed for Man but for all other things, for creation was perfect. Nor was the seventh day simply primal in history for it was left open for ever, and it related to Eden which Man was to use to fill the earth, i.e. to Edenise all the earth as he was king over it. In Psalms 103 and 104 the psalmists are called to bless God, for blessing God is the response to His blessing

⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, Burns & Oates, Tunbridge Wells, 1992, p. 136.

creation. It is noteworthy that in Genesis 9:1–7 Man is again blessed by God, following the Flood, and told to 'Be fruitful and multiply and teem on the earth and multiply in it'. Sadly enough the creatures now have fear of Man, whereas in the first commission (Gen. 1:28–30) this was not the case. At the same time God makes His everlasting covenant with Man and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. This accentuates the original blessing God gave to all things and from which they derived their fullness for their fulfilment of allotted vocation.

To this point we see the work of God in creation and how it is that out of His fullness He gives all things their fullness and Man his fullness. There is nothing that He has created which He does not bless and so seal its fullness. Also the gifts of God are without recall so that Man does not lose his responsibility to be as he was created to be, to be ontological—if we may use that term—in order to follow the vocation given to him and to live in the light of the threefold blessing of the creation: of marriage and fecundity, and of the sabbath rest. When Man alienated himself from God he has ever had to contend with the demands for which he was structured to fulfil. He has insisted on going his own way and not God's way. This is what makes his lot so difficult as we will further see.

Before leaving our rather brief treatment of God as Creator, Man as created along with the entire creation, Man and creation destined for eternal fullness out of God's fullness, we now need to appraise the situation in which Man was placed when created.⁶ We need to see the God who is Triune, and how and why it is that creation came into being. We have seen the principle in Ephesians 3:14–19 that when we know the love of Christ it is then we are filled unto all the fullness of God. If we start there as does the Epistle to the Hebrews then we see that all things were created by a Son.

THE LOSS OF FULLNESS

It is certain that Man lost human fullness at the Fall in Eden. Man was structured to be full by creation and blessing and this was the creation-gift of God. Nothing of contract was present, for behind all creation was the unilateral, everlasting covenant of God. Creation, we might say, was the gift of God. The warning against death was simple and clear, and contained no threat. Seemingly Man was not disturbed by the news God had given him. Man had what we might call 'freedom of choice'. In this sense he chose to believe he would have fullness in himself. He had been made full—as a human creature—to fulfil his vocation. His vocation was intended to be in God in the best perichoretic sense, i.e. God and Man were in communion. In that communion nothing was lacking for the first couple.

For a moment we might contemplate the wonder, beauty and security of creation. Peter in one of his letters says, in effect, 'You can trust your souls to a faithful creator'. This must mean that all that God created was very good (cf. Gen. 1:31) so that all which happened in it ought always to be 'very good'. It means also that there

⁶ My book *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997) could be helpful in showing the background of the everlasting covenant to the things of creation such as human vocation, i.e. the fulfilling of the mandate given to Man in Genesis 1:28–30, marriage as important to universal human living, and the power of the sabbath rest. Unfortunately I missed talking about the Kingdom of God which is inherent in Man subduing the earth and being king over it, the very matter which Christ came to fulfil because Man did not fulfil that part of the commission.

can be no flaw, no weakness will endanger the creation so that it can fail. Again, and principally, it means that whatever goal God has in view for the creation, i.e. His purpose in creating the universe, will be realised. Often in our theological reading of the Scriptures we fail to enter the story of God as it is written. Theologically we know that Eden was God's Paradise for Man but then we fail to see how amazing it was for Man to be created outside Eden, coming into true human being by God breathing into the clay form He had made, and then the sheer wonder of Man being placed in Eden—the special garden God had made for him to be his earthly paradise. The mandate or commission given to Man has to do with his being in Eden, for this was to be God's most beautiful and functional garden and to be the criterion for the world to be shaped as was that garden, both in its physical aspects but primarily in its perichoretic relationships between God and Man, God and creation, Man and creation. It will seem like speculation to say that Man realised he had been born for the noble task of bringing the creation under his control as God's royal steward, and working with Him for the successful climax of His plan for creation *as a faithful Creator*. Surely he understood this as he also understood the nature of God's threefold blessing. The reality of a fruitful world, the garden where all trees were good for food and pleasant to the eyes, where there was a tree of life and only one tree could bring death were they to eat of it. We conclude that practically Man must have sensed his great vocation, especially as he named the animals. His longings for a mate must have thrilled him beyond measure as his bride was made from his side. He may have been conscious of the meaning of that 'profound mystery' of which Paul later wrote in Ephesians 5:22–33. Certainly he was in the line of creating human epithalamiums for the beauty of marriage and true human love (cf. Gen. 2:18–25). He had no sense of loss, no lack of vocation, no loss of rest, no slavish fear of God or creation. To the contrary: Man as man and woman lived in the most beautiful love and peace. As I suggested, in order to understand the fullness of Man, we would have to have been there, in the story, sensing the marvellous vocation of being a worker and steward in God's plan. Man was without dread, fear, and felt-guilt. Little did he know how everything would change for him in his moment of ignoring the word of God and hearing and obeying the word of the serpent in Eden.

If somehow we can enter the story which is the story of God and the human race we certainly can empathise with what happened with the advent of the serpent. The serpent as he was later called 'that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world . . . who accuses them [the brethren] day and night before our God' (Rev. 12:9–10), seduced the woman and convinced the man that he would gain even more than he had, by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. How quickly everything changed! How rapidly the fullness of God diminished! On the principle that Man's creational fullness comes from his knowledge of God in the inner man,⁷ Man was to live exhibiting those properties of God which are holiness, righteousness, truthfulness, goodness and love. We can say that these properties which governed all original Man's living diminished down to nothing, or—as some would have it—reversed, so that self-holiness, self-righteousness, self-truthfulness, self-goodness and self-love became the expression of the fallen Man's 'fullness'. They were in fact 'emptiness' as nothing of true life can

⁷ In Ephesians 3:14–19 a person is filled with the fullness of God because he or she knows the love of Christ, so at creation Man received the fullness of God by knowing the love of God. This at creation constituted being in the image of God and living as the reflection of God, but it was a state Man lost. This brought him under the domination of Satan and all evil.

originate with sinful Man. He refused God and so the commission given to him and he found he was not full as a human outside of God. He was given over to existential emptiness as he was given over to the curse.

All of this loss of fullness and the accompanying curse is not easy to describe. If we go immediately to Ephesians 3:14–19 and glory in knowing the love of Christ by which we are filled unto all the fullness of God then, and only then, can we grasp the horror of not being true persons in God. Moving from perichoretic communion with God to discovering the dread of nakedness, and even more the presence of God without that presence being welcome, and yet the absence of that presence being all the more terrifying in the presence of guilt, really defies human description though not human experience. The loss of communion with God is really the loss of true community, a point we are later to consider. Cain, though a murderer, had need of God to protect him, and feared being sent out from the face, i.e. the Presence, of God. This can be seen in Genesis 4:10–16. The matter of the break-out from the ontological society of God and Man, as we will see, has caused much pain, grief and hurt in human history. Not only have countless millions felt the impact of insane slaughter and genocide, but also all frightening forms of homicide—suicide, matricide, patricide, fratricide, deicide and the like. The tangled mass of relationships which has always constituted humanity has brought endless misery to our world. It is no wonder we seek antidotes to this pain and suffering and devise means of filling our emptiness.

MAN IS CREATED ONLY FOR FULLNESS

A well-known maxim is 'Nature abhors a vacuum'. It appears that Man abhors emptiness. If a man will not be filled 'unto all the fullness of God' he may seek anything to supply fullness, and often fullness of any kind. We have seen that 'the earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof', so that creation has no innate emptiness. There was no emptiness to be abhorred. Romans 8:20 tells us that it was subjected to vanity (*mataioteti*) or futility, i.e. was prevented from fulfilling its true function, but tells us that it will one day come into its destiny or fullness. For Man there is fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord (Ps. 16:11), but all things out of God are vain or empty, i.e. *kenos*. Against *kenos*, 'the river of God is full of water' (Ps. 65:9) which is a beautiful statement. Indeed Psalm 65:9–13 could be seen as Adam in his state of innocency talking of Eden's fullness, if we may use a little imagination:

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it,
thou greatly enrichest it;
the river of God is full of water;
thou providest their grain,
for so thou hast prepared it.
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
Thou crownest the year with thy bounty;
the tracks of thy chariot drip with fatness.
The pastures of the wilderness drip,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.'

Psalm 46:4 says, 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High'. Jerusalem does not have this kind of river. It only has a small stream, but the idea of the river of God is seen in Scripture, in Eden (Gen. 2:8–14), in Ezekiel

47:1–12 and Revelation 22:1–5. It is always flowing in fullness. Likewise the Samaritan woman at the well is promised a fountain will spring up in her, doubtless quenching her thirst and filling her. No less is Christ represented as living bread and living water in John 6:35, whilst from Christ flows the fullness to those who drink of him and believe of him. Not only are they filled but also they flow over as rivers of living water. At this point we will not speak of Christ being filled with the Holy Spirit, nor those at Pentecost and others following them. Their fullness is evident and wonderful. We need, then, to show likewise the kinds of things that fill human beings when they reject God as 'the fountain of living waters' (Jer. 2:13; 17:13), when they are not 'full of . . . wisdom', 'full of faith', 'full of grace and power' (Acts 6:3, 5, 8) and 'full of good works and acts of charity' (Acts 9:36). Romans 1:29–32 shows the terrible results of rejecting the evidence of God in creation, and deliberately rejecting God Himself. The first step towards filling themselves with other than God was to devise their idols and worship them. True morality decayed into horrible forms of immorality and the end was that God gave them over to a debased mind to do what they ought not have done:

They were *filled* with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

'They were filled' is really horrific reportage. Again, unless we are in the story and not information seekers we will pass over it like the weary and cynical watchers we are of the world scene on our TVs. It is a strong echo of Ecclesiastes 9:3, 'This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all; also the hearts of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.' It also reminds us of 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (ASV):

. . . as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine.

Surely it is linked with the fallen human heart, for as Jesus said:

What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a man (Mark 7:20–23).

There are of course other things which can fill the heart which seem like intrusions upon persons of faith, and not from sin. Job speaks of 'so I am allotted months of *emptiness*, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. When I lie down I say, "When shall I arise?" But the night is long, and I am *full of tossing* till the dawn' (Job 7:3–4). He observes, 'Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and *full of trouble*. He comes forth like a flower, and withers; he flees like a shadow, and continues not' (Job 14:1–2). The psalmist also has the problem, 'For my soul is *full of troubles*, and my life draws near to Sheol' (Ps. 88:3). All of these 'fullnesses' are known to us and we

wonder what will be their solution, and whether it is simply that we need the fullness of God to deal with them.

CONCLUSION: THE NEED AND WAY FOR BEING FILLED UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Our study series is not being set forth as a distinterested enquiry into the fullnesses Man may know in his lifetime, but for the dynamic outcome of truth which can bring him to be filled unto all the fullness of God. Also as how it is that men can become filled unto all the fullness of evil. For example, is Satan the counterpart of God in every way and is it possible that he can seduce men and women to 'love' him? Does he thus fill persons unto all his 'fullness'? Does this fully explain the horrors Man has committed in his time? Are there evil 'blessings' and 'cursings' given by the kingdom of darkness to oppose God's plan of grace? Is there a place and a means by which all Christians may and should become filled unto all God's fullness or do we have to wait for special times and seasons in order to proclaim the Kingdom, suffer in its service and see the Kingdom come in power in this most important, present eschaton?

These questions mean our studies can be of immense value, but in order for this to be so we will need to be in the story—as we have said—and get the whole mind of the Scriptures. For us personally it will mean that we are being filled unto all God's fullness. We can do no better than close with Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3:20–21, 'Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.'

THE FULLNESS OF CREATED MAN

THE FULLNESS OF GOD AT CREATION

'God is light and in him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). This is a statement of the essential nature of God, that is, God *is* light and not just filled with light. He does not get filled with light from elsewhere. Likewise 1 John 4:8 and 16 say, 'God is love'. When Moses asked to see God's glory—that is, His essential self—then God answered in terms of Exodus 34:6–7, 'The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation"'. The term 'abounding in' does not just mean that He has elements such as mercy, long suffering, forgiveness, and so on, but that these properties are unique to Him: they *are* Him. So, 'alone has immortality' (1 Tim. 6:16), when it is said of Him 'the Father of lights', means lights come from His light. We might say that He is the source of everything, but we are not just thinking of what can be derived from Him so much as what He *is*, for this is a vast subject. It may well be that secondly we think of what we are by virtue of Him in being in His image.

When we think of the fullness of God we think of two things: (i) fullness is what God *is*; and (ii) fullness is what God *does*—that is, God *does* from what He *is*. It would follow, then, that Man being in the image of God is what he—Man—is and does by virtue of being the image of God's *fullness*. It is said theologically that the Trinity operates perichoretically, that is, that the three Persons give space to one another; they give their fullness to one another and receive the fullness of one another by mutual indwelling. That means the Father gives out of the fullness of His Fatherhood, the Son out of the fullness of his Sonship and the Spirit out of his being the Spirit of the Father and the Son. This constitutes the ontological (immanent) Trinity in being what it *is*, and then what the Three *do* as One constitutes what they *do* in creating and sustaining the creation, redeeming it when the Fall of Man adversely affects all the creation and ultimately renewing, sanctifying, glorifying and perfecting it. All of this portrays the fullness of God, as also it is effected by that fullness. The work of creation by the Three Persons is not an event which took place once for all at a beginning time, but is a work which, beginning at creation, is in full action continually. It will be completed in the *telos*-time but the activity of God will not terminate at the *telos*-time for there will be a new (renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth wherein dwells righteousness. The 'things that will be' are from our present point of view wholly unknown although the sense of them has already been given to us by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7–10). Just as we are to comprehend the love of Christ now (Eph. 3:14–19), so we are to comprehend God—that is, know God—*now* (cf. Jer. 9:23–24; Dan. 11:32; John 17:3; Rom. 1:21; Hosea 2:20; cf. Hosea 4:1; 6:3, 6).

In speaking of God's fullness we have refrained from quoting the multifarious statements by Man¹ or related to Man by which we see the nature of God. Some contemporary theology sees God as 'wholly other' and, because of this, unknowable by Man.² The nature of God's fullness is shown in the relationships God has with Man, and so in the processes of history, as history is primarily God's story. It thus happens to be Man's story too, so that any other 'fullness' of being that seeks to exert itself in history may call history its story. According to 'ontological fullness' so God is the true God and so Man in innocence is the true humanity.

THE FULLNESS OF MAN AT CREATION AND IN HISTORY

What we seek to do in this section is to draw a picture of Man as created and commissioned. Some theologies proceed without taking Man into consideration as he was at creation and in Eden; that is, they have no picture of him as innocent. In innocence he was truly Man qua Man. We can gather much regarding what he was, and if salvation is the restoration of Man to be fully again in the image of God, then we can gather much as to what he will be both at the *telos* and beyond. As we saw in our previous study about God, when God created Man in His image it was the action of the full life of the Godhead in both *being* and *doing*. Man was truly Man when he derived his being—his being and doing as the true human way—from God. Being the reflection and the reflecting of God in His being and His doing, he was fully Man. As such he was the image of God. Morally he represented God by the gifts of holiness, righteousness, goodness, truth and love which he exercised in innocence and these were realised and expressed in what he was *doing*. In all this being and doing he was in union and communion with God. The action of the fullness of God towards created Man gives to Man his fullness in his responding relationship with God which is his obedience to God in God's outworking plan for creation. Man is responsible to respond to God in what He is, and what He gives. He is accountable for all his being and doing.

Man, Though in the Image of God Is Ever, Only a Creature

What we have to realise is that Man is ever, only *human*. He has never been, nor will ever be *divine*, if by divine we mean *obtain deity*. The Divine substance (*ousia*) differs from the human substance (*ousia*), God being Creator and Man being creature. We will see that there is correspondence in God and Man—God being Creator and Man being creature; God being King and Man being His regent; God being moral and Man acting morally—and so on. Man, because of ontological correspondence with

¹ When we make mention of 'Man' it is intended to jive with Genesis 1:27, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. Here the male and the female are one and, as such, are one in the image of God. Here there is no gender reference. The upper case 'M' is used to denote humanity. We use the lower case 'man' for male persons as we use the lower case 'w' for woman.

² We are trying to limit our comprehension of God's fullness to how the first couple would have seen and known Him, but it is impossible to do this, by nature of the case. The Old Testament shows us that God spoke to Man, and this continued after the Fall, and then God has continued to speak to Man by all kinds of media since his expulsion from Eden. As to substance (*ousia*) God is 'wholly other' but as to relationships it is impossible for God not to communicate with those who 'live, and move, and have their being' in God. In many cases it is the sinner who is most aware of God, albeit that consciousness is not in pleasurable communion.

God—especially redeemed Man—may have fellowship with God without having to become divine. John says, 'Our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:3). Paul, too, talks about union with Christ, even to sharing his fullness (Eph. 1:23) and having God's fullness (Eph. 3:19).³ Jesus talks about his disciples seeing his glory (John 17:24). Peter speaks of being 'a partaker [*doxes koinonos*] in the glory that is to be revealed' (1 Peter 5:1), and in 2 Peter 1:4 of becoming 'partakers of the divine nature' (*theias koinonoi phuseos*) which may well have a parallel meaning. In Greek theology this last verse has given rise to the teaching of *theosis* which certainly speaks of participation in the Divine nature—whatever is meant by the word 'participation'—and uses the words 'divinisation' and 'deification' but stops short of saying Man obtains the *ousia* of God. At the least it speaks of Man being wholly restored in the image of God. Certainly, too, it means 'Man at top pitch'. At the most, well, we will only know fully at the *telos*. We now will attempt, as far as possible, to draw out an anthropology of created Man, especially as he was in innocence and, as such, truly in the image of God.⁴ We will look at Man also as fallen, but with this in mind that his fall does not irrevocably cancel out his being in the image of God, and does not take away utterly his moral responsibility, negate his irreversible call and vocation, or neutralise the *telos* for which he was created and in which he was predestined to participate. Having created Man in His own image, God demands the obedience of this His creature, however impossible it may appear for Man to render the required obedience. Whilst all our information regarding Man will be drawn from the text of the Bible, yet it will be drawn from many places within it.

Man Commissioned to Work with God in Creation

Let us first look at the mandate or commission which God gave to Man at creation. In Genesis 1:26–30 we read:

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.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so.

This passage should be read with Psalm 8:3–8. Here the Psalmist exclaims with wonder that God should have to do with Man and so much to do with him: 'what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?' He

³ It would be as acceptable to speak of believers in Christ being filled with his fullness (Eph. 4:13), being filled with the Holy Spirit (e.g. Acts 1:8; 2:4; etc.), and being filled with the Father's fullness (Eph. 3:19), especially if we recognise that it is these Three Persons who together create Man (Gen. 1:1ff.; Ps. 33:6–9; Job 33:4; John 1:1–4; Heb. 1:1–3; etc.).

⁴ I have attempted this in some of my books such as *The Things We Firmly Believe* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1992); *The Knowledge of God* (NCPI, Blackwood, 2002); *I, the Man* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1996); *Man of Dust: Man of Glory* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1986); *Man is—What?* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1982); *The Meaning and Making of Man* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1996); and see the Bibliography of this last book for more general reading.

is not saying Man is a feeble and unimportant creature, but that he is significant and the most important in the world. He tells God, 'Yet thou hast made him [Man] little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.' That is how important Man is. God has told him, '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'. Man was to rule the whole earth. As the image of God he was king, representing Him, but *he was the real and only king of the earth*. He was called to this royal vocation. In Genesis 9:1–2, following the Flood, the commission is repeated to Noah and this time God says of all creatures, 'into your hand they are delivered'. Whereas the creatures had not feared Man at creation, now they do. In relation to God, then, Man is king over all the earth.

Man, Made Living by the Breath of God, Becomes a Creature of Eden

We know Man was formed outside Eden and became 'a living being' (*nephesh*) because God breathed into him the breath (*nesheva*) of life (Gen. 2:7). The breath here is *nesheva* but in other places it is God's spirit or breath (*ruach*) which Man has in him. The terms are virtually synonymous. No other creature had God breathe into it to be created, although all creatures live by virtue of God's *ruach* within them. Man was special, exceptional. No creature could become king over the earth and so be active in God's Kingdom in this way. Eschatologically the redeemed community will be a Kingdom—kings and priests unto their God. Here, by means of the commission, God is making Man His partner in what He is doing and will do in the world. We might venture to say at this point that creation is the protology of royalty and the *telos* its completion—its eschatology.

Man Is Ecclesial; a Creature of Community

When we look further at the mandate of Genesis 1:26–30 we see that His image is a combination of male and female, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'. Genesis 2:18–24 shows us the process through which the man goes in order, with the woman, to be Man. Admah—the man—has no partner or helpmeet. Seeing the community of creatures made him long to have the same kind of life and fellowship. God did not create the woman in the same way as He created the man, but created her from the man's side. He did not breathe into her the breath of life for in some way this came to her from the man through God. We repeat: she was created from the man and so the lines of marital relationship were set. Because the two—now become one—were told to 'be fruitful and multiply' then Man was created as a social being. Let us think of this matter.

I prefer the term 'ecclesial' to the terms 'social' or 'gregarious', although they, too, apply psychologically to Man.⁵ If we look in hindsight with our knowledge of the

⁵ I have been indebted to Edward Farley for his book, *Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1975), in which he speaks about Man having been created as an ecclesial being. Ecclesial being is inherent in creation and not just a state to be attained. Along with this book but more emphasising the solidarity of the human race is Russell Philip Shedd's book, *Man in Community* (Epworth Press, London, 1958).

remarkable community of God which we call 'the church', that is, 'the ecclesia'—to say nothing of Israel's ecclesia or *qahal*—and if we know the intimacy and power of this community, then we can envisage God's plan for the human race in which Man was called to be God's active partner. We can see the tremendous power of a human race called to be an intimate love-community. We take it that there is a strong ecclesial thrust in human beings, and we see evidence of that in nations. But for the Fall and then the murder of one of the first two brothers and the toppling of Man's prideful endeavour at Babel, perhaps the human race could have achieved the thrilling principle and entity of *ecclesia*.

When we look at the terms of the commission we see that Man was to fill up the earth. When Man was breathed into by God and became a living being, God took him and placed him in Eden with all its joys, comforts and glories. It seems that God wished his humanity in Eden to take the modes and configurations of that living and expand them to the ends of the earth. As has often been said, 'to Edenise the world'. The ruling of the world would be an Edenic ruling, the community an Edenic community (*ecclesia*) of love.

Man Is a Creature of Love by Creation

Whilst we are talking of love we can conclude that the creation was the fruit of love, was made to be a love matter, structured by love for love. This is part of the image which Man is, for it is a love image. Created Man can then be said to be one who is loved by God and who loves Him in return, and so loves ecclesially. We might use the comment that humanity was created to love *naturally*. A little later we will be talking of God's own law, and how that was made intrinsic to Man by creation so that we can say in terms of the *imago dei* that Man is a moral being. For the moment we will explore the fact that there is an intimacy between God and created, innocent Man. Much contemporary theology speaks of God being unknown as though He has always hidden Himself. It is also said that He is totally other than what we are, yet when He commissions Man to be His partner in His plan and working purpose in creation, surely Man must know Him *as Man needs to know Him*. That knowledge must have been most wonderful. With the theological knowledge of the Triune God we now have of the interpersonal relationships of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and of our understanding the shape of Man as being after the whole order of God, we can conclude that innocent Man must have been a remarkable creature. Man just has to be ecclesial if he is in the image of God.

Man Is a Creature Who Is a Child of God the Creator-Father

When we turn to Paul's speech to the philosophers at Athens we hear him say first that God 'gives to all men life, and breath and everything'—a repetition of the first few chapters of Genesis and some of the Psalms. Then we are told that the entire human race was made from one man, or one 'blood', and that God had planned that humanity should cover the entirety of the earth and even 'the boundaries of their habitation' with a view to them seeking after Him that '*they might feel after him and find him*'. In any case it is true to say 'In him we live and move and have our being'. These elements cover the totality of human life and activity. We need to see that man-in-innocence was in these modes and configurations before he fell.

It was to the same audience at Athens that Paul said, as some of the Greek poets had said, 'we are indeed his offspring'. Paul was saying that created human beings are

the children of God. It is true that some commentators reject such a statement, preferring to speak of God as an Originator rather than the Father of human beings. If Originator then what kind of an Originator? What relationship does He have with those He originates, especially when He makes them in His own image? Here we could enter into debate, but for the ones who have been made in His image, ones who are royalty, linked with His own Kingdom, creatures whom He minds and cares for, and makes just lower than the angels—until, later, He exalts them—why not call them His own children as He did with Adam, Israel and later, His ecclesial people, the church? Genesis 5:1–3 encourages us here to link 'image' and 'sonship':

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

The fact is that God created humanity to be His family. In Luke 3:38 Adam was said to be the son of God, and certainly, with the coming of Christ, human beings were to become sons and/or children of God by regeneration and adoption.⁶ *Re-generation* seems to indicate that the generation of creation brought sonship so that following the Fall regeneration was required to renew the sonship (cf. John 1:11–13; 3:1–14). Man being the son of God would mean that innocent Man knew God as his Creator, his King and his Father, so that he corresponded to God as a creature to the Creator, a servant to the King and a son to the Father. This would have constituted the identity of Man. It also would have constituted the true community of God. So we see more of the ontology of Man.

Man a Moral Creature, Is a Creature of Glory

In 1 Corinthians 11:7 it is stated, 'For a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man'. In the light of Genesis 1:27 it is a somewhat puzzling statement, but Paul is referring to verse 3 where it is said that 'the head of a woman is her husband'. Here he is pointing to the man first being created by God and the woman from the man. In Genesis 9:6 the image of God is to be held inviolate, 'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image'. There is no mention of the first man being the glory of God, but Paul is speaking about the first man being the glory of God as created directly by Him, and the first woman being the glory of the first man because created from him. For our purposes Adam being described as the glory of God is valuable, for what is God's glory but His essential being with all the properties or attributes which are uniquely His. Man by creation is a dependent creature: indeed that is the meaning of the word 'creature'. Man draws on his Creator for his needs of all kinds and these include the moral properties of God.

When Moses desired for a good reason to know the glory of God, the Lord spelled out His glory rather than showed it visibly, although the glory of His presence was often expressed in the purity of light and radiance. Glory (*kabod*) is something which is rich, substantial, imperishable, authoritative and of great power. Exodus 34:6–7 shows God telling His glory:

⁶ See my book *I Love the Father* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1974), for more material on this subject.

The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.’

Man’s true glory as ‘the image and glory of God’ is that he is a *moral creature*, showing forth in life and action the derived or supplied properties of God.⁷ Note that by ‘moral’ we do not mean being law-keeping as such but that we have moral *choice* in regard to doing moral acts. We do not mean being moralistic. We mean obediently choosing what is right.

Man a Moral Creature, Is a Creature of Law

This brings us to the moral side of our biblical anthropology. Put in another way we say Man is a creature of law, one under the law of God.⁸ Great debate has raged for a long time on whether we should consider law only from first considering the gospel, that is, that the order is gospel and law and not law and gospel. At this point in our study we are seeing that biblical anthropology demands we first see law, noting that gospel is essential for guilty Man, and in any case Man as created being is not intelligible apart from law in his beginning.⁹ Rather than reason out that the law is God’s own law (subjective genitive) and is given to Man (objective genitive), implanted in him in creation, I have chosen a few quotes from Puritan and other authors, without scrupulous documentation:

Thomas Goodwin: ‘The hand of him who was the “Mighty Counsellor”, did guide the pen that wrote it in Adam’s heart at first’, and ‘himself is the substantial image of God, and the [*prototupon*, prototype] of the law’.

Ernest Kevan: ‘The Law is thus the glorious expression of the glory of God in so far as that glory is to be realized by the creatures whom He has made in His own image’.

Robert Bolton: ‘Law eternall, resident in the pure, glorious infinite minde of God, which is that order which God before all ages hath set down with himselfe, for himselfe to doe all things by’.¹⁰

Ernest Kevan: ‘God is consistent with himself. The law of God written in man at his constitution, and which requires his moral likeness to God, can have been no other than the transcript of God’s own perfections in the form of moral demands. Further, because man was made in God’s image, the moral law written within him must but be part of that image’.¹¹

P. T. Forsyth writes: ‘The holy law is not the creation of God but His nature, and it cannot be treated as less than inviolable and eternal, it cannot be denied or simply annulled unless He seems false to Himself’.¹²

J. A. Motyer: ‘*Law in the Image of God*. Turning now to a very different genre of Scripture, we find in Lev. 19 that God has provided another image of himself on earth. Every aspect of human experience is gathered into this rich review of man’s life under God’s law: filial duty (vs. 3), religious commitment (vs. 4), ritual

⁷ See my book *All Cry, Glory!* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1999) for a useful biblical treatment of glory.

⁸ See the excellent treatment of the Puritan teaching on Man and the law of God in Ernest Kevan’s *The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Carey Kingsgate Press, London, 1974), and two of my books, *Sweeter Than Honey, More Precious Than Gold* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1995), and *The Law of Eternal Delight* (NCPI, Blackwood, 2001).

⁹ Gustaf Wingren who was Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Lund, Sweden, has taken up the battle against European theologians and others who hold the order of gospel and law in his many books. Strongly asserting the doctrine of creation he places law before gospel stating this was the position of the early church. Two books cover his argument well (*Theology in Conflict*, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1958), and *Creation and Law* (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1961).

¹⁰ These three are quoted from *The Grace of Law* by Ernest F. Kevan (pp. 62, 63, 67). I have omitted the names and books quoted by Kevan of the many Puritan authors.

¹¹ E. F. Kevan, *Keep His Commandments* (Tyndale Press, London, 1964), p. 9.

¹² *The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought* p. 79, Quoted by Trevor Hart in an article ‘Morality, Atonement and the Death of Jesus’ in *Justice the True and Only Mercy: Essays on the Life and Theology of Peter Taylor Forsyth*, edited by Trevor Hart (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1995), p. 28.

exactness (vs. 5), care of the needy (vs. 9), honesty in deed and word (vss. 11–12), and many more, touching on relationships and even on dress, hygiene, and horticulture. Yet all this variety suspends from one central truth: “I am the Lord.” Lord is the divine name, the “I am what I am” (Exod. 3:14), so that the significance of the recurring claim is not “You must do what I tell you” (i.e., ‘lord’ as an authority word) but “You must do this or that because I am what I am”; every precept of the law is a reflection of “what I am.” 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 . . . When man in the image of God and law in the image of God come together in the fully obedient life, then man is indeed “being himself”: His nature is the image of God, and the law is given both to activate and to direct that nature into a truly human life; any other life is subhuman.’ ¹³

In other words the law of God Himself is His own law by which He subsists, and making Man in His image cannot but make this law intrinsic to Man. So Motyer writes, memorably, ‘Man is the living, personal image of God; the law is the written, preceptual image of God . . . When man in the image of God and law in the image of God come together in the fully obedient life, then man is indeed “being himself”’. This gives us a rich view of Man as created in the image and glory of God. He must have had a knowledge of God which was close to transcendent, and when he knew that God’s plan and purpose for creation was one with His will and His law then it is no wonder that the commission of Genesis 1:26–30 was a large matter to him.

Man Is a Worshipping Creature, Primarily Worshipping God

With the law also goes the idea of worship. Worship and obedience go naturally hand in hand. We know that one of the primary ideas of worship in both Testaments is service and that service is worship. Genesis 2:15 says, ‘The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it’, and the words are used together elsewhere for guarding what is given and for worshipping in work. See Deuteronomy 4:19; Numbers 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26 for these ideas.¹⁴ Man was to work and to worship. Some see Ezekiel 28:12–19 as being a description of Adam in Eden; others see the King of Tyre typifying Satan. It is difficult to determine but if it is a picture of Eden then it speaks very much of worship, especially when it speaks of ‘the holy mountain’, the term used generally for mount Zion in Jerusalem. Certainly worship must have been a rich exercise for innocent Man. His union and communion with God would have been very beautiful. It was also commanded. If we speak of law as command then the creational commission and the injunction of Genesis 2:15–17 must have constituted that law, but there was no giving of law at the time of creation other than implanting that law in the heart of Man, for that was all that was needed and it was indispensable.

As we will see, to turn from worshipping God was to turn to idols. Man cannot live without an object of worship, i.e. God or idols. He must have communion of one

¹³ J. A. Motyer’s article ‘Law, Biblical Concept of’ in the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker, Grand Rapids, 1990), p. 624.

¹⁴ See Gordon J. Wenham in his *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Waco, 1987), p. 67, ad. loc.

kind or another or he is not a human. His worship then is his service and his service is not to a law but to God, and yet by the law which is the law of God Himself. If we have not grasped the wonder of God creating us then our worship will be deficient of giving honour to God, that is, glorifying Him. It will also lack praise and thanksgiving which is His due and in the giving of which we are richly human. Worship whilst personal is not individual, but is in the fellowship of other humans. As we have seen, Man is ecclesial and so comes together. It is in the community that we worship God. This is seen in the law in Israel, where fine details are prescribed for worship including the working out of the sacrificial cultus and the ethical manner of community living. All of this leads us on to the theme we have scarcely alluded to in regard to Man in innocency.

Man Is a Creature of God's Everlasting Covenant

This is perhaps the most important theme of all and it is linked with law and worship, namely covenant.¹⁵ By 'covenant' we mean God's unilateral agreement with Man and all creatures in which He declares He will be their God and they shall be His people and creatures, and that He will act in love and mercy towards them in their obedience and will chastise them in their disobedience but not cast them off for ever, for His is 'the everlasting covenant' and where sin intrudes He will make provision for the forgiveness of their sins except where sin is done with a high hand or apostasy is committed—'I will not acquit the guilty'. His covenant is made in love before and for creation, but when Man sins then His love expresses itself in grace. It is not a contract nor a quid pro quo situation but obedience is expected of innocent Man because God has covenanted with him, and where this is not forthcoming then judgment and chastisement come to the perpetrator of sin.

Dumbrell and others point out that the word 'covenant' is not mentioned until Genesis 6:18 (cf. Gen. 9:9, 11, 17; 17:7, 19, 21) where God tells Noah, 'I will *establish* my covenant with you', using the term *heqim berith* referring to something already made but now being *established*, whereas *karat berith* is used elsewhere meaning 'to cut a covenant', that is, 'to make a covenant not already *made*'. It is assumed, at least by some scholars, that in Genesis 6:18, 9:9, etc. the former making of a covenant is implicit in creation.

In this paper we do not have time and space to pursue fully the matter of a creational, world covenant made before the time of creation. Some theologies speak of a covenant made with Adam although they vary as to the nature of that covenant. Certainly in Jeremiah 33:19–26, God is said to have made a covenant with the sun and the moon which can never be broken. This covenant with the sun and the moon may well be part of God's covenant with the whole creation (cf. Gen. 9:8–9; 16–17). Likewise His covenant with David and his family can never be broken (2 Sam. 7:1–29) and this would go for His covenant with Israel (Exod. 24:1–8), with Abraham (Gen. 12:1ff.) and then back to Noah and all creation (Gen. 9:1–17). There are many elements which connect all mankind with the creational, universal covenant. Reformed systematic theology saw God making a covenant with Adam.

¹⁵ See W. J. Dumbrell's *Covenant and Creation* (Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1984), especially pages 16–33; O. Palmer Robertson's *The Christ of the Covenants* (Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, 1980); Geoffrey Bingham's *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* (Redeemer Baptist Press, Castle Hill, 1997), as also their bibliographies.

In the book *Love's Most Glorious Covenant* I put forth three elements of the covenant: (i) vocation—God's calling to Man to be partner with Him in His plan for creation (Gen. 1:26–30); (ii) marriage (Gen. 2:18–24) which is 'the profound mystery' (Eph. 5:32) which speaks of the intimate relationship between God and His people; and (iii) the Sabbath rest, the open seventh day (Gen 2:1–3) for all God's people who enter into that rest (Heb. 4:8; Matt. 11:28). At the time of writing the book I had not perceived that within the vocation or calling of Man there was another element, that is, that of Man's kingship—among the three other elements. Man was to be king over all the earth (Gen. 1:28b; cf. Ps. 8:5–8). This, we see from the New Testament perspective, is his call in regard to God's Kingdom. Man was to subdue the creation and control it, thus coming to being 'kings and priests unto our God and Father' (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; cf. 20:4). These four elements show what is Man's activity in history.

MAN'S FULLNESS IN HIS STATE OF INNOCENCY

Introduction: The Problem of Knowing the Matter of Man-in-Innocency

Here we, who in Adam are corporately guilty, and personally do acts of perpetrating sin, have the problem of human guilt and so cannot comprehend what it is to be in the state of innocency. Paul says, 'To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted' (Titus 1:15). This certainly gives us some edge on the matter. In Romans 5:18 the same apostle says, 'Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men' (Rom. 5:18, *RSV*). It seems Paul is giving us some of the mind of a pure person, totally acquitted of all guilt, and living as an innocent person. So then, we have to rely on faith in the Word to somehow comprehend what it means to be 'innocent of great transgression' (Ps. 19:11–13). The flush of guiltlessness which pervades a person when he or she is wholly forgiven is the closest we come to an experiential sense of innocency.

Taking all these elements into consideration we do have some understanding of what Man was in a state of innocency. We might even call it 'ontological memory' or some such thing. For one thing, 'natural law' would appear to be more than a vestige of God's true law in the community of Man. Man has never been able to so blot out the *idea* of law that he can be lawless with impunity. He is ever a guilty creature, and sometimes chronically so, although he develops techniques of hiding or submerging his guilt. Adamic guilt has not stopped Man from being in the image of God and sometimes his despair of himself leads to morbidity. Besides the guilts of doing wrong things, he has what we may call 'existential guilt', that is, of not being a true existent in a world which has purpose in all humanity acting appropriately in every situation and being actively engaged in God's will and plan. What we are trying to say is that Man cannot erase the notion from his mind that he has departed from what he was and what he now should be—innocent and in a state of great glory, authority, accomplishment and personal integrity!

The Practice of Human Fullness in the State of Innocency

What we have done up to this point in our search for a biblical anthropology of created Man is simply to state the categories of Man as God created him and them.

Our aim in seeing Man's unfallen fullness is to see how wonderful was that state in which he lived. Our next study on 'The Empty State of Fallen Man' will only be realised when we see the temptation by the serpent, and then the fall into sin. The nature of this act and the horror of it can only be realised by what we see innocent Man was, and so what he did in the temptation. It is not our intention to open any of that in this present study. What we will do now is show the significance of all the elements of Man as created and we will take the headings above to show him as active in creation. The headings above are: Man Though in the Image of God, Is Ever, Only a Creature; Man Commissioned to Work with God in Creation; Man, Made Living by the Breath of God, Becomes a Creature of Eden; Man is Ecclesial; a Creature of Community; Man is a Creature of Love by Creation; Man is a Creature Who Is a Child of God the Creator-Father; Man a Moral Creature, Is a Creature of Glory; Man a Moral Creature, Is a Creature of Law; Man is a Worshipping Creature, Primarily Worshipping God; and Man Is a Creature of God's Everlasting Covenant.

It is not suggested that all these headings cover what Man is but they are a basis for our looking at the primal fullness and for developing the picture of created Man. All the titles really overlap one another and at the same time give us the sum of what Man is by creation.

Man being a *creature* is practically important for it tells us that Man is always dependent upon God to be truly himself. He may use the powers and gifts he has been given in a wrong way but he cannot accomplish what is required of him without receiving aid from God. To realise creatureliness is to know how to be truly human. God does not expect Man to do anything apart from Himself who is sovereign in creation. Man was commissioned by the mandate of Genesis 1:26-30 (cf. Ps. 8:6-8; Gen. 9:1ff.). Man, then, knows his calling and vocation and finds his true humanity in obeying the commission. He is not bewildered by not knowing what he should do. The elements of the commission give him a wonderful place and participation in creation. God has breathed into Man the breath of life by which Man becomes noble and is planted in the Garden of Eden, for it is in this environment he finds the fullness of himself as the king of creation, overcoming all powers of the creation and controlling them to God's glory and their own benefit. It is within the Garden that he is given his wife and discovers the joys of married love, and its true vocation, as in Ephesians 5:21-33, and one which becomes the principle of God's intimacy with the human race.

In the commission—given in Eden—Man is to take the life of the Garden and spread it to the ends of the earth—'fill up the earth'. The Edenic way of life is the true way of Man. This was the fullness he knew, and it is for all the world. Revelation 22 tells us the ultimate Edenic way of life which shall be. When Man knows this is his true environment he is greatly heartened at his true identity, for it helps him to realise his true nobility. Man being ecclesial is no light thing. As the Trinity is a community, a divine fellowship, perichoretic with its gifts, its love-service, its giving and receiving, so is Man intended to be the same. Fallen Man may utilise this element in wrong and harmful ways, but a work does not have to be done to get Man to be ecclesial. He is that by creation and it is essential to his well-being. It is deeply satisfying to him in what he is and so it is emotionally fulfilling.

When it comes to Man being a creature of love by virtue of his creation by God who is love (1 John 4:8, 16), then ecclesial being is enriching to him. Man is a child of God by creation, and so all persons are familial in their living. The richest way we can say God is moral is to say that God is love. In one sense Man when created did not need the grace of God since there was nothing in him to be restored, but that love

would one day express itself in restoring grace. Love expressed itself in such a relationship with Man that he would realise this by the law, and in its practice—the law of God being inherent to him. The human community was created to be loving in all its parts and to all those parts. Law was in itself delightful and Psalms 1, 19 and 119 would one day point that out to fallen Man. All that is love, and all the gifts must have caused primal Man to fall down at the feet of God and worship him in filial, familial delight and thankful adoration.

Did created Man know he was under the covering of God's everlasting covenant? How much more so does Man in innocence know than does sophisticated, philosophical Man in his critical assessment. So we say at the close of this survey of the fullness of God and of innocent Man that, yes, Man in the fullness of God must be someone of extraordinary character, beauty, regality, ability and life that God should regard him and constantly visit him (cf. Ps. 8:6–8). For his part he was on the verge of a great happening, the joy of obeying God in His will and plan, so that in history he would move with His Creator to the climax of this world's march to a new creation, even beyond this glorious one. He was poised on the edge of a great and marvellous happening. With everything in his favour, including a pure heart and conscience, what was there he could not do, and so not be in God? With the flow of God into him such as a God–Man perichoresis what more could ever be desired? Even so, *his faith had never been tested*. Could it be possible that this Man knowing his identity and innocently living in God should listen to the word of a serpent and evaluate it against the word of the God who created him? Could such a thing ever happen? If it did, what then?

THE EMPTINESS OF FALLEN MAN—1

FULLNESS AND EMPTINESS

We have seen that out of His fullness God created Man so that Man is dependent upon God, and in this dependency has his fullness as Man. In our previous study we saw that only as Man is fully in union and communion with God can he have the fullness which is the creational blessing. This state of innocency in which Man is obedient to God constitutes his natural, normal fullness. Another way of saying this is that Man was created as the image of God and so reflects all that God is although He is not anything that God is. For example Man is not love, goodness, truth, righteousness and holiness, but he reflects these properties of God. As God is always God in action, the image was supposed to reflect that action and do it by way of obedience to God's commission of Genesis 1:26–30, and his commands of Genesis 2:15–17, and His law implanted in Man by creation.

In order to remind ourselves of the nature of the *imago dei*, we set out Otto Weber's understanding of it:

The Positive Meaning of the Concept of the 'Image of God'. What then should we say positively? First of all, it is of decisive importance that the 'image of God' is clearly not a concept of being or quality, but of relationship. Man is what he is in his specific inviolability and position of dominion because of a relationship to God which is neither inherent in him nor a characteristic of him, but which reveals its reality in the mandate which is given to him. The very concept of 'being in the image of God' is not altogether unambiguous. It suggests that one should look for the 'image' of God in or about man (which is a conceptual reversal of what Gen. 1:26f. says), or better, that the 'copy' is made abstractly independent of the 'original,' which in turn makes the relationship into a static relatedness of being. When we use the concept of the 'image of God,' we must concentrate solely upon the relationship which it bespeaks. Man is 'in the image of God' to the degree that he stands *in* this relationship. In substance this relation cannot mean anything else than this, that the authenticity of man's being is derived from God. This is significant in two directions. On the one hand, man does not have his humanity in himself; he is what he is solely in and out of his relationship to God. Here he is something which he otherwise is never supposed to be: here he is the bearer of a 'function.' But on the other hand, he is undeniably more than that. Just as he does not have his humanity within himself, this humanity is maintained and supported in the deity of God, because it is willed and established there. God does not merely tolerate the fact that there are creatures there, which are different from him and exist outside of him. He *wants* this special creature, which represents all other creatures and is set over all of them as the one he has mandated; he wants this specific creature in its specific oppositeness to all other creatures, this creature which is the opposite of the other creatures in a 'like' way to the way God is this creature's opposite. This is the creature which is supposed to know him, to thank him, and to praise him (see Rom. 1:21). God conducts his history with this creature. That is the reason that this special creature, this creature in the specific sense, is inviolable, and that an honor is ascribed to him (Ps. 8:6) which is not God's own honor but has its origin there.¹

We remind ourselves that Man, because of being created by God and for God's purpose, is under irreversible obligation to continue being as God created him

¹ *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol. 1, by Otto Weber (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1981), pp. 561–2.

and the purposes for which he was created. This is a serious obligation, as immutable as God Himself, and to change would be irresponsible towards God, himself and all creation.

THE WAY IN WHICH MAN IS EMPTIED OF HIS FULLNESS

Man's innocent state had not been tested: he had not been confronted by temptation or a tempter. The temptation by the serpent was for Man to doubt the word of the Creator and trust the word of the serpent. Since Man was full to what is human fullness, why should he doubt the Creator's word? Having been created and given vocation it was for him to praise God, honour Him, and live in thanksgiving. To doubt God's word would be to discount the commission and command of God. Even if Man were to fall for the temptation, 'You shall be *as God*, knowing good and evil', which might seem desirable, yet he was already *like God* (Gen. 1:26–27) though he was not *as God* which would always be an utter impossibility since what is created cannot be as the One who creates.

The commission had set out Man's program in this world, for Man was to be partner to God in His plan, so that God's plan was to be Man's plan. Now Man, by acceding to the serpent's temptation, believed he would be able to act on his own since he would know what is right and what is wrong. His disobedience, then, was his refusal to believe God was true, and so to act in His plan. His rejection of God was not just a sin, a breaking of a law, but the refusal to be one with God in God's plan for creation. Law is not just a matter of right behaviour, keeping to a set of rules, but is living as God had created him to be and to do, so that all his being would be in action along with God's action, thus reaching God's *telos*. This must be seen in all its enormity when, in Romans 5:12–21, and speaking of Adam's original sin, Paul uses the terms 'sin', 'transgression', 'disobedience' and 'trespass'. Man refused God and set himself up to work independently of God. We do not know whether the first couple had it in mind to work in God's plan but if so then they would do it apart from God, that is, on their own. If this were the case then it would be quite impossible and quite evil.

To repeat what was set out as our headings in the previous paper and which showed Man as creaturely and not as equivalent to the Creator we spoke of 'Man, Though in the Image of God Is Ever, Only a Creature'; 'Man Commissioned to Work with God in Creation'; 'Man, Made Living by the Breath of God, Becomes a Creature of Eden'; 'Man is Ecclesial, a Creature of Community'; 'Man is a Creature of Love by Creation'; 'Man is a Creature Who is a Child of the Creator–Father'; 'Man, a Moral Creature, Is a Creature of Glory'; 'Man a Moral Creature, is a Creature of Law'; 'Man is a Worshipping Creature, Primarily Worshipping God'; and 'Man is a Creature of God's Everlasting Covenant'. It is only as we keep Man's state of innocency in mind that we see the enormity of his pride in rejecting his own creaturehood for some kind of imagined deity. The enormity of his pride was and is the measure of his evil. His sin was also in refusing the commission *as set out by God*, and so his vocation, his marriage, his place of ruling creation and his participation in God's seventh day rest were rendered null and void. Jeremiah 10:23 (cf. Prov. 20:24; 16:9; Ps. 37:23; John 14:6) tells us the way of Man as a creature, as one who cannot know his way, or walk in the way except by resorting to God. 'I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps'.

If at this point in our paper we do not keep in mind the glory of innocent Man then we will not see the dreadful nature of the Fall—the fall from so high! We will not

even begin to understand the nature of original sin—the sin which emptied Man of his created fullness. Ecclesiastes 7:29 states, ‘Behold, this alone I found, that God made man upright’. This surely speaks of Man as upright when created in the image of God, and as being innocent, but then the writer adds, ‘but they have sought out many devices’, that is, evil schemes. This speaks of fallen Man. To empty himself of God and to refill himself² with other elements means the loss of original righteousness, holiness, truth, goodness and love as he possessed these elements in union with his Creator.

This brings up the whole matter so hotly debated as to whether Man became so depraved as to be no longer in the image of God. Meredith G. Kline in his commentary of Genesis³ on 1:26–28 says of the image of God, ‘This divine image is neither losable nor reducible but its ethical direction is reversible. It assumes its proper form, of course, in conformity to God’s holy will.’ I think Kline has presented us with a remarkable understanding of the *imago dei*. He is saying, virtually, that Man being in the image of God cannot be ‘unmanned’ but can go against what it is to be Man and so is in that moral sense dysfunctional. Man, for his part, loses the joy of being properly human.

Whether it happens to be that we will not fully face the enormity of our human rebellion in our father Adam *because* original sin permeates us, or that we refuse to face that sin and our present sin also because we endlessly justify the Adamic happening and our present sinning may be difficult to determine, but the human mind seems unbelievably dull to the horror of the Eden happening, of the *lese-majesty* then committed, as John Murray describes it:

The fall, then, was complete moral revolt against the sovereignty, supremacy, authority and will of God. In the command given to Adam there was epitomized the sovereignty, authority, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth of God. Disobedience to it was an assault upon the divine Majesty, repudiation of his sovereignty and authority, doubt of his goodness, dispute with his wisdom, contradiction of his veracity. Sin is transgression of law [*anomia*], and law is the expression of all that God is in the moral sphere in relation to man, as absolute and sovereign Creator and Ruler and righteous Judge. Sin is all along the line of divine perfection a contradiction of each.

In ethics the ultimate question is, What has God commanded?, not, What is the most expedient?, nor, What, according to the nature of things, is the good or the best? And the ultimate test of our loyalty is preparedness to obey simply and solely because God has commanded. When man fails here it intimates the bankruptcy of moral character.⁴

Calvin seems to say that the image is effaced:⁵

As it was the spiritual life of Adam to remain united and bound to his Maker, so estrangement from him was the death of his soul. Nor is it any wonder that he consigned his race to ruin by his rebellion when he perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and on earth. ‘All creatures,’ says Paul, ‘are groaning’ [Rom. 8:22], ‘subject to corruption, not of their own will’ [Rom. 8:20]. If the cause is sought, there is no doubt that they are bearing part of the punishment deserved by man, for whose use they were created. Since, therefore, the curse, which goes about through all the regions

² We are not saying that Man thought of refilling himself with other elements but that he thought he was sufficient in himself. All his thought at that time was foolish (Rom. 1:21–23).

³ *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, eds D. Guthrie and J. A. Motyer (IVP, Leicester, 1977), p. 83.

⁴ *Select Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Collected Writings of John Murray, vol. 2 (Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1977), p. 70.

⁵ *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeil, trans. by Ford Lewis Battle (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), vol. 1, bk 2, ch. 1, pt. 5, p. 246.

of the world, flowed hither and yon from Adam's guilt, it is not unreasonable if it is spread to all his offspring. Therefore, after the heavenly image was obliterated in him, he was not the only one to suffer this punishment—that, in place of wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth, and justice, with which adornments he had been clad, there came forth the most filthy plagues, blindness, impotence, impurity, vanity, and injustice—but he also entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries.

It is interesting that Calvin in his *Commentary on Romans*⁶ says of 3:11—'*No one understands, no one seeks for God*'—'empty is the man in whom there is not the knowledge of God', a point we will want to take up again, insisting as it does that the image in its completeness is having the knowledge of God, which is another way of saying being in union with Him, so that this is the knowledge of God for us which is eternal life (cf. John 17:3; Hosea 4:1–3, 6–7; 6:1–6; Jer. 9:23–24).

Iaian D. Campbell⁷ quotes Luther's book *The Bondage of the Will*:

The Augustinian view of the total depravity of man, that man in his totality—body, soul, mind—is a fallen creation, is the best empirical explanation of it all, and basically biblical. Man is corrupted, tainted, impure, in all he thinks, says and does.

On page 104 he also quotes the Puritan, Thomas Goodwin, as saying that the image of God in Man has been defaced, but its relics remain 'lest men should be devils upon earth'. Richard Sibbes is another Puritan whom Campbell quotes on page 106 of his book:

1. We are under the sin of our first father . . . we all sinned in the loins of Adam our first parent; and the guilt of that first sin lies upon us. 2. . . . There is another sin that is derived and springs from that first sin; which is the deprivation of the image of God, the privation of our nature. We call it original sin, whereby we are stripped of that good we had in our first creation, and have the contrary image, the image of Satan stamped upon us . . . 3. And then we are under actual sins, which are so many bonds to tie us fast under sin . . . Every sin doth, as it were, tie us faster to damnation, and keeps us faster under the bondage of sin . . . This is the miserable state of man.

The last Puritan which Campbell quotes (p. 109) is the well-known John Owen who says:

. . . we do conclude that the mind in the state of nature is so depraved, vitiated and corrupted, that it is not able, upon the proposal of spiritual things unto it in the dispensation and preaching of the gospel, to understand, receive, and embrace them in a spiritual and saving manner, so as to have the sanctifying power of them thereby brought into and fixed in the soul, without an internal, especial, immediate, supernatural, effectual, enlightening act of the Holy Ghost . . .

It is clear that Calvin sees the image of God is wholly effaced but other parts of his writing do not. For the moment we will leave his qualifications of his statement above in which at least he sees the image defaced, and we will pass on to Luther who sees Man as degenerate but grants that there is something in fallen Man to which the Spirit of God can speak through the Word of God. Most Puritans would agree with Goodwin who says that relics of the image remain 'lest men should be devils upon earth'.

⁶ *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, trans. John Owen (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1979), p. 126.

⁷ *The Doctrine of Sin: In Reformed and Neo-Orthodox Thought* (Mentor Press, Fearn, 1999) p. 93.

What we gain from the Reformers is that Man has not just ‘slipped’, as it were, through some error or misjudgment into an unfortunate situation which has divided him from God. He is vehemently anti-God. He is evil because he took on board the serpent’s lie and cannot know the truth. In John 8:34–47 Jesus certainly shows the Jews who opposed him that their beginnings were in the devil, and the devil is their father, and they sought to do *his* will and not *God’s* will. At a later point in our study we will come back to the principle that empty human creatures are dangerous to have in the creation and that sin, of itself, is likewise dangerous as is a terrorist. To be empty can be to be devilish on the one hand by evil deeds or, on the other hand, by being the self-righteous who by their own efforts justify themselves. Such were the Jews to whom we have just referred in John 8. These were the very Jews, along with Gentiles, who crucified Jesus. Both would protest against being deemed ‘empty’.

THE IMPORTANT MATTER OF ORIGINAL SIN

The understanding of the term ‘original sin’ has been greatly debated down through the Christian centuries, particularly as to the manner of its distribution throughout the human race. What is known is that every human creature feels the effects of the Adamic choice between being an obedient creature of God or being a person of ‘self-power’, being dependent upon God or dependent on one’s self. What happened all those years ago has its constant, unremitting affects and effects on us today. Otto Weber describes the dynamics of what he called ‘originated Sin = *peccatum originans*’:

It was not wrong that theology has attempted from very early on to interpret, using chiefly Genesis 3 and the idea of ‘originated sin,’ the character of sin with the use of one single concept. Genesis 3 has always been powerful enough to prevent theology from seeking the character of sin in the realm of ‘morality,’ that is, to judge the ‘fall’ as a single trespass against a single law or command or one side of the one moral law. It is quite obvious that such a procedure in regard to Genesis 3 can only lead to the most grotesque of distortions. What happens in that account is, seen morally, almost trivial. The sole source of its importance is in the fact that in this apparently trivial matter God and his creature are both completely and comprehensively the issue. Thus, *hybris*, unbelief, and disobedience emerge as the essential descriptions of the character of this so-called model event. *Hybris* applies in that the offer of the serpent that man should be ‘like God’ and in this capacity know both good and evil, and be able to decide what is useful and what is detrimental in his own competence, reveals that sin is in fact man’s self-elevation and thus his rejection of his creatureliness as an act of his own choosing. Unbelief has been seen in the fact that man, in succumbing to the promises of the serpent, apparently does not trust God, becomes mistrusting of God’s goodness, and thus wants to gain control of good and evil, the useful and the detrimental, in effect, the ultimate mystery out of which he lives. Disobedience is really identical with unbelief. The command is the protective limit which surrounds man, and sin is the breaking through of this boundary, which again has its roots in mistrust. It is clear that these three definitions all coalesce with each other. It is just as clear that they all presuppose a certain concept of the opposite of sin, of good, and that can be defined as man living within his created limits and dependent totally upon the goodness of his Creator within those limits. We may then summarize that sin, in that it is the active denial of the goodness of God, is simultaneously resistance against God’s good command, and against his dominion as a gracious rule. Under these circumstances, it is essentially negation, so very much so that it catapults the existence of man into the negativity of his denied but not deniable creatureliness, that is, into a literally impossible existence. In this sense, sin is ‘privation’ (*privatio*), as the Orthodox emphasized in following Augustine and most of the Middle Ages—‘privation’ as man’s depriving himself of himself by seeking to rob God of what is his. Sin is thus not something created—for what is created is God’s creature—but is solely the denial of what is created. It does not live in and of itself but lives from its robbery of what is not its own. But as denial, sin is

paradoxically something 'positive,' something which does in fact exist, although this is incomprehensible. It is not something nonexistent, but something which lives on the basis of its robbery. It is certainly not something which is not yet good or which is lacking in good, but is its 'positive negation.' It exists, although it cannot exist. And that is its mystery.⁸

In Weber's passage above we note a number of things in order to comprehend original sin. The first is his term *hybris* which is used here in the sense of arrogance which comes from the Greek verb *hubris* (*hybris*) which means 'to mistreat, abuse, insult'.⁹ The word is used in theology to denote self-assurance to the point of arrogance and an overweening pride. The second term is 'unbelief', meaning all that Adam had known of God and had trusted in Him, he now refused to believe was authentic. He disbelieved God and believed the promise of the serpent. Disobedience, the third element, must not be looked at as though there was just a formidable law which Adam sought to escape, for it was not against a law separated from God that Adam had looked to defy but it had been God Himself he defied. It was Adam—and Adam as the whole race—who disobeyed the God who had created him. Weber says that the three elements—*hybris*, unbelief and disobedience—come to the fore to reject God and His commands. Man is told by the serpent that he will be 'as God' and not just 'like God', god, or gods, the term used in Genesis 3:5 being *elohim*. Weber then defines sin as, when he says, 'We may then summarize that sin, in that it is the active denial of the goodness of God, is simultaneously resistance against God's good command, and against his dominion as a gracious rule'. He then takes up the theme that sin is *privatio*, that is, 'man depriving himself of himself by seeking to rob God of what is His'.

This last sentence is astonishing. Man was not just disobeying the law of God which we might say was the law of God's being—that is, His subsisting reality and total action—but he was seeking to arrogate this Divine and supernatural mode of existence to himself! The serpent promised him he would be 'as God' and he accepted this crazed notion as being true—true ontologically we would say. This meant that fallen Man's eschatology and his *telos* were radically altered in his Man's mind. Man as God had created him and as he was to be, was out of phase for ever. The serpent was seeking to hijack the whole of God's plan for creation, and the first part of the attempt was to hijack Man so that he might never be a covenant partner in the outworking of the Divine plan, and never be 'partakers of the divine nature' (2 Pet. 1:4), that is, never participate in God's plan for eternity. This tells us how arrogant were both the serpent—who lied—and Man, who listened to the serpent. This is of the inner essence of sin, but the full nature of that essence we cannot really capture in understanding except by the law (Rom. 3:19) and by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11; cf. Acts 2:36–37). It is interesting that some European theology insists that sin is an ontological impossibility, though, they say, it can be an ontological mistake, that is, that Man does not change what he is but he can think he does so. This thinking is a mistake.

One way of seeing that Man is sinful is simply to go through the Scriptures and total up the events of persons which are sins. Then, taking a view of all that has been chronicled in the general history of the whole human race, we have a full record of sin.

⁸ Otto Weber, pp. 593–4.

⁹ See *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, eds. Horst Balz & Gerhard Schneider (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1993), p. 379, and *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. 1 (Oxford Uni. Press, Oxford, 1973), p. 993.

In both records the matter of human sin and crime is overwhelming. On the first count Geoffrey Bromiley shows the reality of original sin:

Sin comes into the world not by a series of individual falls but by the one historical fall implies, even though it does not specifically state, the reality and the doctrine of original sin. *Original sin means that a nexus of sin embraces all people without exception.* This is amply illustrated in the further story of the race. The murder of Abel follows almost at once, and wickedness increases so rapidly that it soon brings down the judgment of the flood (Gen. 4:23f.; 6:1–6). Nor does the elimination of all but Noah's family basically change the situation, for sin is present there, too (Gen. 9:20–24f.). The stories of Babel, Sodom, the Canaanites, and even of the family of Abraham, the children of Israel in the wilderness, and the settled people of the judges and the monarchy show that all people are constantly and persistently involved in sin. The prophetic literature is one long protest against the various forms of sin both against God and against neighbor. The psalmist recognizes both the sin of others (Ps. 53) and his own sin (Pss. 32; 51; 139:23f.), even from the point of conception (51 5 [MT 7]). That sin has become part of the very life and being of fallen humanity is clearly and forcefully stated in Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Prov. 6:14. The truth of the universality of sin, of the solidarity of the race in sin, is worked out most systematically in the NT, especially in Romans. Rom. 1:18 – 3:19 is devoted to the shutting up of all—Jews as well as Gentiles—in sin. 'All have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23; cf. Isa. 53:6). Carnal humanity cannot please God (Rom. 8:5–8). Sin is a bondage to which all are subject (Chs. 6f.). By the trespass of one, sin has entered into the world, and with it condemnation and death (5:12–14). Quite apart from the guilt of individual sins, there is a universal guilt and condemnation in Adam out of which none can contract and from which there can be no pardon or deliverance except in Christ, the second and righteous Adam.¹⁰

Speaking in this regard Heinrich Hepp in his *Reformed Dogmatics* (p. 331) states the nature of original sin, using Reformed theologians as they put forth the matter of original sin:

Inherited sin includes two things, imputed sin and inherent sin. Imputed sin consists in God's attributing Adam's guilt to all Adam's descendants, because of their natural descent from Adam (i.e. because of the natural unity of the human race in Adam), as their own guilt, as the guilt of their nature.

Original sin includes two things, imputed sin and inherent sin. Many dogmaticians do not use these terms. But they definitely enough describe the concepts expounded by them, usually by the application of the expressions *reatus*¹¹ (inadequately *culpa*) and *corruptio*. E.g. Polan . . . who reckons to original sin (1) 'the fault of disobedience or defection from God in Adam's loins' and (2) 'the corruption following upon Adam's defection in the whole nature of man'.¹²

To this point we have leaned on those that we deem to be good theologians mainly of the Reformed tradition. This is because much work has been done over many years by these theologians both on the meaning of Man being in the image of God and Man committing original sin. This has been most helpful, but what we are seeking to do in our studies is to examine Man—fallen Man—as an empty creature from a full one and the means he uses to fight emptiness and gain fullness—whatever these terms 'emptiness' and 'fullness' may mean to him. What we shall do, then, is look at Man in

¹⁰ The article is in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. 4, eds G. W. Bromiley, et.al. (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1988), p. 519.

¹¹ *Reatus* is liability to punishment: *culpa* is guilt. *Reatus* follows *culpa* and the outcome of sin is *corruptio*—corruption.

¹² *Reformed Dogmatics* by Heinrich Hepp (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1950). This volume was compiled by Hepp in 1861 and translated into English in 1934 by Ernst Bizer. Karl Barth discovered the book in his time and was greatly moved by it, writing a Foreword to it in 1935. Both Bizer and Barth by no means follow the Reformers in all their utterances but accord high praise to Hepp's works. Certainly they are a unique resource for studying Reformed theology, theology which is immensely important to all theological studies.

his state and his actions, what he goes on being and what he goes on doing. When we compare this with Man as originally in the image of God then we can see the measure of the Fall, the height from which he has fallen, the quality of his fullness in God and the substance of his present fullness or, as it should be called, his 'emptiness'.

THE NATURE OF EMPTY MAN

There are two words used in both testaments of the Bible with the ideas of vanity, futility and emptiness. In the LXX and the New Testament the Greek word *mataiotes* uses these ideas, and also the Greek word *kenos*. It is no news to anyone that in this life everyone will come to experiences of futility and meaninglessness. What is news, however, is that all of life can, in fact, be that way. As we proceed in our studies we will realise that one of the keys to fullness of life is to know God and serve Him as also we serve our fellowmen. One of the happenings of people who have rejected God is the fact of futility. In Romans 1:18–25 we are told that when Man rejected the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:21, 22, 28), 'for although they knew God they did not honour 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.' Here for 'futility' is the word *mataiotes*. Here 'their senseless minds were darkened' describes not disability to think but to think insensibly although to human reasoning it sounds sensible. The inability to think properly is put down to (i) suppressing the truth in acts of unrighteousness; (ii) failing to praise and honour God and be thankful to Him; and (iii) rejecting all knowledge of Him.

One matter we ought to note is that God loves all human beings (Matt. 5:43–48) and acts well towards them, caring for them in spite of their rebellion. He has also allowed Man to work a law which is called, generally, 'natural law'. In appearance it roughly follows what is God's law, and without which Man would be even more confused, futile and senseless in his living. Fallen Man has a mixture of the laws of God and the laws of his own god/s. This means that the knowledge of God is still the key to what human sensibility there is, but wholly knowing God cannot happen apart from hearing the word of God and obeying it.

In regard to *kenos* and *mataiotes*—vanity—we know that the Book of Ecclesiastes uses the latter term 35 times when the writer says, 'All is vanity and a striving after wind'. Many readers find this book cynical, world-tired, and without purpose. To the contrary: the writer is trying to show what is sensible and what is futile. He teaches that the regular pattern of the creation is no cause to be bored but to be assured God is Creator and Sustainer. To try other ways of enjoying life than trust in God and His law is to invite disaster. One should remember the Creator in the days of his/her youth (Eccles. 11:7 – 12:8) and thus the days of the evening of life will be beautiful. Meanwhile life is rich as we know God and obey His laws—His directions for life.

The Hebrew synonyms to *kenos* are *arwon*, 'sin'; *hebel* (Abel), 'breath of wind, nothingness'; *kazab*, 'illusion'; *shav*, 'futility', 'lies', etc. Mark 7:7 and Matthew 15:9 quote Isaiah 29:13, 'In *vain* do they worship me', that is, Israel has departed from knowing God in its heart and only simulates true worship. It is interesting to note that vanity—both *mataiotes* and *kenos*—is often linked with worship.

As for *mataiotes* in the New Testament it is imperative that we look at its uses. Acts 14:15 is states clearly, 'Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these *vain* things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.'

This commanded turning is surely a reversal of Romans 1:21–23, and relates to Jeremiah 2:5, ‘Thus says the LORD: “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness [*hebel*; vanity], and became worthless?” ’

When it comes to what men deem to be wisdom, Psalm 94:10–11 speaks, ‘He who chastens the nations, does he not chastise? He who teaches men knowledge, the LORD, knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.’ So in 1 Corinthians 1:17–25, and 3:18–20—‘the thoughts of the wise are futile [*mataioi*]’—for the wisdom of men is precisely that of Romans 1:21–22. So Peter can say to the believers, ‘You know that you were ransomed from the *futile* ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot’ (1 Pet. 1:18–19), which is again a reversal of Romans 1:21–22, a reversal of futile living which in this case is futile worship! This reversible cannot be accomplished without the death of Christ!

Again, in 1 Timothy 1:3–7 and Titus 1:10–16 Paul speaks of those who have wandered away into ‘vain discussion’ (*mataiologian*) and ‘there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers [*mataiologoi*] and deceivers’. Paul told Titus to ‘amend what was defective’ and this applies to those who are ‘unprofitable and vain [*mataioi*]’ (3:9, AV).

There is another notable use of the word in Romans 8:18–25 where it is said (vv. 20, 21) that ‘the creation was subjected to futility [*mataioteti*], not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God’. Paul is not saying that the creation is futility but that it has been subjected to futility by God who subjected it in hope of emerging from its bondage to decay brought about by Man’s sin. Creation had wanted to be in total action but had to bear the futility until the chosen time for it to be freed from the futility to give its full force of service in the glory of the liberty it would receive when the sons of God would be revealed. Man’s futility brought about by rejecting God would vanish when salvation would come to its projected fullness.

The uses of *kenos* in both Old and New Testaments are of two kinds, one simply related to emptying as in Christ emptying himself in and for the incarnation (Phil. 2:6–8) or taking that action which will empty one of faith (Rom. 4:14; 1 Cor. 1:10–17. *Mataiotes* is a strong word when it comes to Man becoming an empty creature. As we suggested above regarding Calvin’s comment on Romans 3:1—‘*No one understands, no one seeks for God*’—‘empty is the man in whom there is not the knowledge of God’, a point we now take up again in the light of Romans 1:19–23. Here Man becomes futile in his thinking and his senseless mind is darkened. Thus Man is utterly devoid of acceptance of God. He deliberately rejects Him. He is now living in a chaos, the even tenor of his way destroyed. As created he was one with God, being His image; insisting as it does that the image in its completeness is having the knowledge of God which is another way of saying being in His image and thus in union with Him, so that this is the knowledge of God which is eternal life (cf. John 17:3)—Man related to the living God. In Ephesians 4:17–19 Paul describes the Gentiles’ way of living:

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility [*en mataioteti*] of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.

The man who is—from his point of view—emptied of God, is, as we have said, in a chaos. His life is disrupted. He is created so as to be dependent upon God so that in his rejection of His Creator he must quickly have a god, an idol, and must be as totally committed to this idol as he was to God. When he rejects God he comes under the judgment of God. His conscience is now active—‘quivering’ we might say. Guilt brings existential pain and the climate for more sin and more guilt is established, and so hardening of the heart; searing of the conscience; consciousness, more and more, of sin and evil without being able to restrain that consciousness. Forcing conscience down more deeply within him only enlarges the danger of conscience—crises. Rationalisations of evil as not being bad, of rebellion against God, and law as being unwarranted increase the futility of the mind and of life. This is what we call ‘emptiness’. It is that enlarging void that can never be filled.

Here we must stop a while in order to contemplate whether these things can rightly be said of all human beings. At first sight not all of society can be said to be obviously evil. We meet so many reasonable people who stick close to natural law and seem to live reasonable lives even if they do not appear to have recourse to God. They appear to be quite decent and not deliberately hypocritical. Some we call ‘secular’ who seem to get along quite well in life. To apply to them the elements we read about sinful Man seems too far-fetched. We can understand that religious folk do their best to keep decent, and yet we know many are simply seeking self-justification in life. They are self-righteous and as such are a danger in society. In Matthew 23, Christ spent time warning his hearers against them, and some of the hearers were themselves self-righteous. He said of them, ‘Decent on the outside and horrible within’! See Matthew chapter 23 and in particular verses 27–28. See also Mark 7:14–23.

We can discern that secular, ‘decent’ persons are often on the same tack. Come certain pressures and decent people crumple and can be caught in evil. Most families would know that. Behind their apparent decency is the same serpent who spoiled the primal couple. In Ephesians 2:1–3 Paul points out that, whatever outward appearances may be, fallen Man is under the power of ‘the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work [energises] in the sons of disobedience’. Following the natural law, decent enough as it seems to be for the action of life, nevertheless by their Adamic origin all human beings are against God, do not honour Him, do not give Him thanks and praise for being their Creator when they blot Him out of sight and mind.

What we have to keep in mind when considering these things is the grace of God. Of the first two children born into the world, one was a prophet of God and the other a murderer. One loved God and his brother. The other was angry with his brother and with God. Grace was there—and is always there—to keep a person in the knowledge of God where he would desire it to be that way. There have been, ever, those who call upon God and those who reject Him, ignoring Him being part of that rejection. No man/woman is denied grace, but not all desire it. This has to do with the *mystery* of predestination and not with the *riddle* of predeterminism.

We conclude this section on people being to all appearances decent folk, though without God in their lives. We can only quote Paul’s words to the Athenians in Acts 17:22–28:

So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”’

We have much more to say about Man’s dreadful state of sin, but let us close this paper by looking at the way God shows His love to a world steeped in sin. John 3:17 states, ‘For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him’. John 12:47 has something of the same idea, ‘If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world’. We will see that Christ did come and will come, to be judge of the world (John 3:18–20; 5:26–29; 8:16; 9:39; cf. Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 14:9; 2 Tim. 4:1), but here we are seeing that God’s desire is to save all men (1 Tim. 2:4). He has planned before time to bring men out of their misery. As to being Creator we are told that his love is not only for those who are His friends, but those also who are His enemies, some of them deadly enemies (Matt. 5:43–48). Paul tells the idolaters at Lystra:

Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness (Acts 14 15–17)..

As we have seen above, he also told the Athenian philosophers that God gives to all men, ‘life and breath and everything’, always extending His goodness to all, but at the same time warning them of the one Jesus Christ who will judge the whole world.

So we understand that God is not hostile to humanity albeit it is sinful. His desire is to bring it to an awareness of sin and its dreadful nature. What He creates He loves, and knows the fall of every sparrow, let alone every human person. Even convicting humanity of its sin by means of the law (Rom. 3:19) and the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11) is not to harass them but to bring them into eternal life. Only as we know this can we press on to the liberating truths of the wrath of God, His propitiatory sacrifice to receive and dissipate that wrath which He sets forth in Christ, and the joy of salvation which comes to humanity when it is released from the power, penalty and pollution of sin and knows the joy of true reconciliation with God. With these things in mind we can press on further to face the reality of our sin and God’s grace.

THE EMPTINESS OF FALLEN MAN—2

THE FILLING OF FALLEN MAN WITH EVIL

'Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs [issues] of life' (Prov. 4:23). This speaks of Man as created. His heart was to deal with the issues great and small of being truly human—issues social and personal, moral and spiritual, the issues of the nations. Jeremiah speaks of God being 'the fountain of living water' and whilst Man is not a fount of himself, he received and then flows forth the springs of living water. Water in a reservoir is not called 'living' which means 'active' and 'flowing', i.e. that which is fresh from its moving sources. Psalm 65:9 (cf. Ps. 68:9) can say, 'the river of God is full of water', which, in its context, speaks of God's lavish provision for Man, particularly in the light of His blessing for His creation. We saw in Romans 1:19–25 Man's ingratitude for the supply God gives to the human race in creating it and providing for all its needs, including that which allows Man to become truly great in his character and his achievements within the plan and purpose of God for him.

We have seen the glories of Man given him by creation, and the intimacy he had with God and his fellow humanity, the reality of vocation, the fine goal and destiny to which that calling was leading him, the beauties of the world and all fellow-creatures, the peace and joy of mind and heart, and the purity of that same mind and heart. How could one deny his destiny and the One who had called him to the *telos* of glory? How deep, then, and fearful, is sin!

In our previous study we saw that Man became empty by his rejection of God. Ontologically—*de jure*—it is impossible for Man to empty himself of what he is and to shed himself of what he has, even though—*de facto*—Man may be empty of his true self and filled with emptiness! We saw that what a man/woman has, and is essentially, has to be denied if one would deny knowledge of God. Rebellious Man effects, it would seem, a catharsis of what he is substantially. Meredith G. Kline was helpful here when he told us, 'This divine image is neither losable nor reducible, but its ethical direction is reversible. It assumes its proper form, of course, in conformity with God's holy will.'¹ It has its improper form—*de facto*—when Man reverses it—against God's creational mode. In Jeremiah's terms, Man immediately goes about hewing out a reservoir for himself, an alternative supply to assure him he has a source from which he can draw. His mistake was in denying that only the One who creates can properly supply the creature.

Time and again we are told that he who denies even the existence of God becomes corrupt and depraved and so works evil. Psalms 14 and 53 are identical in their first few verses:

The fool says in his heart,
'There is no God.'
They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity,
there is none that does good.

God looks down from heaven
upon the sons of men

¹ M. G. Kline, 'Genesis 1:26', in *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (eds D. Guthrie & J. A. Motyer), IVP, Leicester, 1977, p. 83.

to see if there are any that are wise,
that seek after God.
They have all fallen away;
they are all alike depraved;
there is none that does good,
no, not one.

Have those who work evil no understanding,
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon God? (Ps. 53:1–4; cf. Ps. 14:1–4).

It is doubtful whether a genuine atheist can be found, but only those persons who protest they do not believe in God. They have to keep rejecting the ‘knowledge’ that keeps impinging upon them since ‘in him we live and move and have our being’ and because He ‘gives to all men life and breath and everything’—even when we deny that this is the case. Denial of God’s existence has to be daily and even momentarily a matter of the will. The knowledge of God is essential to the peace and fullness of Man. That being the case, Man has to make a god or idol in his own image, an idol which will be transcendent enough to act with powers which are beyond that of a human and so can aid him.

THE FULLNESS OF SINFUL (EMPTY) MAN

It was one thing for Man to insist on his autonomy. It was another for him to live without God. In his state of innocency he had all the admirable qualities we saw in our previous study. He also had all the gifts and blessings of God who is love. He had peace, delight, love, and purposefulness. His environment was holy love. He was in union with God. However his new belief, prompted by the word of the serpent, was that he would gain even more by the serpent-wisdom promised to him. To the contrary: dread fear of God pervaded him, and judgment came to him. To counter these and to retain his imagined autonomy he had to act from himself. His pathetic attempt to cover himself in Eden was a miserable failure. He and his spouse were now naked and ashamed. He needed resources to restore his dignity. His life was chaotic. He needed aid from a source outside himself. He suffered deeply from becoming an enemy of God. This enmity was not by chance, nor in ignorance, but deliberate and ruthless. If sometimes his indifference seems to be unwitting neglect, yet that neglect is still wholly deliberate. To defy the living God and seek resources apart from God meant, as we will see, that Man must invent a god or gods equal to his Creator. Thinking himself autonomous, Man set out to be filled with new and exciting things.

And filled he was; filled with hubris. The things he knew in innocency such as love, goodness, righteousness, holiness and truthfulness now had the prefix of ‘self’, i.e. ‘self-love’, ‘self-righteousness’, and so on. All these reversed elements of the image of God were present. How dangerous they were, for the deceit of sin is what hardens the heart (Heb. 3:13). Romans 1:19–25 describes Man emptying himself of the knowledge of God. Romans 1:24, 26 and 28 tells us that God gave them up to the evil they would commit; thinking themselves free to do what they wished, they were free only to what God gave them up to commit.

Then comes Romans 1:28 and fallen Man’s refusal to retain any knowledge of God as he determined to dis-acknowledge God:

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them (vv. 28–32).

Perhaps Genesis 6:11 is one of the most frightening of all statements: ‘Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence’. We can now add to the list, ‘filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity . . .’ Paul quotes Psalm 10:7, ‘Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness’ (Rom. 3:14). Psalm 26:10 speaks of ‘men in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes’. James 3:8 speaks of the human tongue as ‘a restless evil, full of deadly poison’. Paul spoke of our pre-conversion days as ‘passing our days in malice and envy, hated by men and hating one another’. When Paul met Elymas the magician at Paphos, we have an occasion where fullness of the Holy Spirit meets fullness of evil. Paul, ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’, addressed the evil man with the words, ‘You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy’.

We do not lack references when it comes to human beings being full of trouble, and evil. We might think that it was unfortunate that Man emptied himself of God and thereby became filled with evil. Man, because of the temptation of the serpent, ran upon evil. He deliberately opened himself to the new and exciting (*sic!*) way of autonomy. Such was the deceit of evil. One comment such as Ecclesiastes 9:3 alerts us to the will of Man being in his evil, ‘This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that one fate comes to all; also the hearts of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead’. It is clear from what we have said in the first section of this paper that Man refused the ‘fountain of living waters’ and substituted inadequate reservoirs of his own making, or, we might say, of the Devil’s making. We saw in Romans 1:19–25 Man refused to worship God. The matter is as simple and dangerous as that. Since Man is a creature he denied himself creaturely being and enjoyment along with all other creatures. He needed something transcendent to himself. He needed the lords and gods which we call idols. He was compulsive in worshipping that which is other than God but has God’s attributes. As always he had a wild liberty at the first before the grip of the gods took hold of him and brought him into the pains of conscience and its guilts. Man and his sources—the idols—began to imprison him. That is the meaning behind the statement, ‘Their land is filled with idols’ (e.g. Isa. 2:8; 10:11; cf. Jer. 23:10) and ‘Those who make them [idols] are like them; so are all who trust them’ (Ps. 115:4–8). Man who empties himself of the law of God must fill himself with the law or laws of his/her god/s. As his/her god is, so is every person. As are the gods, so are those who fashion them. As are the devised and their devised domain, so does creation appear to them to be after the manner of this god-shaped world.

THE EMPTY WORLD FILLED WITH THE ENMITY OF EVIL EMPTINESS

Much of contemporary theology seems to have missed the point which was once well known, namely that from Eden onwards the whole of action in the creation is the battle of enmity against God and of God against the Enmity.² The serpent’s mind was to defeat God and usurp His place as Creator. It was to destroy the community of believers in God. We might also call it ‘hatred against love’, i.e. personal hatred of God and active hatred whereby the Devil seeks to destroy love in favour of the darkness and the rule of his kingdom. Shortly we will look at the causes of enmity but at this point we need to note: (i) God uses His power to defeat and destroy darkness; and (ii) no matter what powers Satan uses to destroy God’s Kingdom, God is not diverted from His high purpose in fulfilling the destiny

² Very little has been written on history as being occupied in Satan’s kingdom fighting the Kingdom of God and seeking to displace it. This theme does not seem to attract contemporary theologians, some of whom are uneasy about talk of evil powers and who leave things occultic alone, preferring positive research into the matter of God’s love and salvation history. In some Bible and theological dictionaries the subject of enmity is not mentioned. I have written fairly extensively on what I see as the conflict between God and Satan in a number of books, e.g. *The Clash of the Kingdoms, The Dominion of Darkness and the Victory of God* (NCPI, Blackwood, 1989 & 1977), as well as a commentary on the Book of Revelation. At the moment NCPI are considering publishing a book I have written on the subject of enmity, the enmity that is a vast subject in the Bible. It involves biblical history of the enmity–conflict brought about by guilt, hatred, envy, jealousy and anger. It is important we grasp the biblical presentation of all these elements.

He has planned for His people and His creation. Satan has this madness that he acts as though he were not a creature but a god, *the* god. He passes that same madness on to his victims so that they, too, act and think as though they were also self-powered and self-competent. Yet, in saying all this, we must recognise the deceit which makes him believe the lie.

If we recognise this to be the case, then we can understand the serpent's plan and the ruthless hatred which operates in our world. As Paul said, 'we are not unaware of his [Satan's] devices', but I think on the whole we have been unaware of what the history of the human race has been. One of the illusions under which many live is that the world is a place filled with things both good and bad and one has the choice of choosing. To make one's choices, the illusion says, is acceptable provided one accepts the consequences of choices. To defy God is also acceptable if that is how things are and will be for the enemy of God. For the rest, life is a matter of causes and effects, of actions and consequences, so that that about covers everything. This rather pathetic bit of thinking does not take all things into consideration. God as God is not subject to cause and effect, and as sovereign of His creation is free to do as He wills (Ps. 115:3, 16) but since Man, via the serpent, has made the lie to be the truth for himself, he can think what he wills until the lie is shown to him for what it is. Because God is good all that He creates is good in the full sense of that term (Gen. 1:31). That the serpent-system and the serpent-action are in action and that the two systems or kingdoms clash is evident to those who have faith in God but others have to work hard to support the contention that the lie is the truth.

What we have to learn is that God always takes the initiative which is appropriate to be taken by the One who is the Creator, i.e. the Creator who Himself is love. God is never inactive. He always works for the good of those who love Him and He works against those who would defy Him but, in reality, for them too. Neither is neglected. He may appear to pass over sins (Rom. 3:25; Acts 17:30) but in fact He does not. Either in the continuing process of what we call history or in the final judgment, everything will be brought to light. Nothing can remain unjudged, i.e. nobody gets away with anything in the ultimate. God as Creator has the right, authority and obligation to judge Satan and with him all his empty creatures—celestial and terrestrial—who will seek to take the initiative as they oppose God, but God has already pre-empted them. Take for example the rebellion recorded in Romans 1:18–32. The steps are clear. They undoubtedly knew God, but were unthankful and then took the initiative of refusing Him honour and worship. Thinking they were by their own choice taking up the forms of living they desired, and which the Scriptures call 'sin', they were in fact being given up (*didomi*) to these forms—i.e. these sins—by God. In that sense they were only free to sin and not to do otherwise, not to love, not to be holy. Thus they were caught in guilt and so were forced to sin further and so increasingly to enlarge their culpability even if they had to work hard rationalising that culpability to be no culpability! There was no freedom in them but they lived in the illusion of freedom of choice whilst in fact their slavery was increasing: 'everyone who commits sin', Jesus said, 'is a slave to sin . . . so if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed'.

The Empty Fullness of Idols as Man's Resource

When we trace the original choice Man made against God back to its source in Eden, then we meet the serpent. Inevitably with him we meet the idols. In 1 Corinthians 10:14–22 we have Paul's insistence that to worship idols is to have fellowship with demons. That is, idols are a part of the great Satanic system, the hosts of demonic powers which is given the name 'the world'. As far as possible this system seeks to be the creation *de jure* but as it cannot be this it presents itself as a facsimile *de facto*. As Luther said, 'Satan is God's ape'. Those of God's Kingdom have to be careful to discern the Satanic facsimile which is insubstantial, separating it from the true Kingdom which is ontological and so substantial.

Only it can truly fill. Idols are part of a vast network of powers ranged against God. Not being of the system of love they are filled with its opposite, hate, and operate along such lines. Idols, then, have criteria by which they operate. In fact this is the only way they can operate. These principles may be detected in Deuteronomy 18:9–22. Israel is warned that when it comes into the land God had given to them in Abraham it will be tempted to use the principles and powers long used by the Canaanites. Superstition always accords great power to the occult, and it was generally thought that the gods of the locations had right and ability to do what they deemed appropriate. Occult powers would appear to approximate in their own sphere and operations to the genuine powers of Godly prophecy, for Man cannot live where there is no basis for hope.³ Nothing can, of course, equal the power of true prophecy, especially when it is to be seen in the light of Revelation 19:10b, ‘I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.’ For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ Enemies of God must devise promises to hold their devotees.

In the claim of substantiality by the world, i.e. the kingdom of evil, we, perforce, meet the law of each idol. Idols have laws, each one, and they demand strict obedience. We might call them the laws of the cultuses of nations, i.e. that they are the cultural demands of nations. Idols cannot be the facsimiles of God without being like Him, though falsely so. That is why they must have covenants and laws. In Deuteronomy 4:1–8 Moses argues that the peoples of other nations—i.e. of other idols—will recognise that Israel has great laws and will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!’ They will see that Israel’s covenants, law and laws are superior to the laws of their gods. Moses then asks his listeners, ‘For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?’ (Deut. 4:7). We perceive at the same time that Man—fallen Man—lives in a corporate or kingdom entity, which means there are strictly no individual situations, despite all appearances to the contrary. By this we mean that there is no privatised human autonomy but rather that the kingdom which is an anti-God kingdom impinges on all in it in a corporate manner, so that evil is a concerted operation of which and in which all are participants. Evil, then, is corporate in its repetitive actions. An individual is not permitted to live unto himself but must live as an active participant under ‘the prince of the power of the air’. All are in an empty or insubstantial system which is not God’s created system but Satan’s devised system which compels its members to live tirelessly in a full operation of evil. Jesus gives us a window on to this when he spoke to the Jews in John 8:42–47:

Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love me, for I proceeded and came forth from God; I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But, because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.’

In the New Testament this Satanic system is known as ‘the world’ or ‘aeon’ and Satan is its ruler or prince. In the Old Testament Israel was God’s chosen people as in Exodus 19:5–6, Deuteronomy 7:6–11, 6:1–9, and 14:1–2. Those outside of Israel were the nations and communities opposed to God. The Psalmists were aware of the vicious opposition of evil men and evil powers, especially as they—the Psalmists—sought to worship and serve God. Israel, as a nation, knew it was opposed by other nations because it was the people of Yahweh. James later made the pronouncement that friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4), but the long history of enmity with

³ By this we mean the gods must promise something prophetic, which brings us to the thought of Proverbs 29:18 (AV)—‘Where there is no prophecy [vision] the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law’. Man cannot live without the three tenses, his mind darting between the past, present and future. He wants to know the end from the beginning (Eccl. 3:11) but is unable to do so.

God begins in Eden and is worked out in the history of the nations under the regime of their gods.⁴ Psalm 2 clearly delineates the universal hatred of God—‘Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying, “Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.”’ It is not just by chance that Psalms 2 and 110 are often quoted in the New Testament.

The Root of Enmity

It may sound simplistic to say that the root of enmity is guilt.⁵ By guilt we are talking of the objective disobedience or sin which humans do. They may or may not *feel* guilt as we put it but they have separated themselves from God by the sins they have done (Isa. 59:1–2). They are guilty. To disobey God is to refuse Him in His reasonable demands upon us. The law of God in its subjective form means that the law of God is the law of His own being. That law is given to Man, gift-wise, in creation so that Man may be in the image of God. To refuse to obey it is an action against God because we do not love Him. First John 2:3–4 shows us this, ‘And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says “I know him” but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ First John 3:4–6 speaks similarly, ‘Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him.’ First John 5:2–3 also tells the same message, ‘By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.’ In Eden, Man lived in the environment of love and so obedience ought to have been natural. The serpent, however, implied that God was the enemy of Man. We have seen that at that point Man became God’s enemy. Because he believed the serpent he disengaged from God because he no longer believed God was love and Eden to be the environment of love. His disbelief came in the fascination of him being able to dispense with God because his own powers were—or would be—sufficient.

One clear window on sin and the enmity which comes from its guilt is the case of Cain and Abel. John in his first letter tells us that Cain killed his brother Abel ‘because his own [Cain’s] deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous’. This matter was brought to a head when God rejected Cain’s offering and accepted Abel’s. Cain was shown as morally deficient, Abel as a righteous man and as one who loved his brother. Guilt and a bad conscience tell the person that he or she is not living in the fullness of the image of God. God questioned Cain regarding his anger and said, in effect, ‘If you are doing well, then there is no need for anger. If not then sin is a power which will destroy you, unless you trust me for its forgiveness.’ Guilt drives Cain on to murder his brother and Genesis 9:6 shows us that to strike one made in God’s image is really to strike God. Enmity is born out of our guilt.

⁴ Nations trusted their gods to look after their welfare, to protect them, and when the time was auspicious to give them victory over other nations. If they became victorious, then they praised and thanked their gods and set them higher in the order of the deities. Their relationships with the gods was on the plane of ethics, hence as we see they had covenants and laws according to their cultus (worship system) and so the culture which was thus shaped.

⁵ When we talk of original sin we mean the sin which Adam perpetrated when he rejected the word of his Creator for the word of the serpent. It is debated whether the descendants of Adam are guilty for this sin. Leaving aside the debate regarding guilt, Man as made in the image of God is accountable for being a true existent in God’s creation. All carry guilt because none is a true existent. When Man rejected God, refusing to honour Him, and became an ingrate, he was flying in the face of God’s creation of him, and his own responsibility to be actively in the image of God. This is the guilt he always carries with him. As in the case of Cain when it was implied he was deficient, he was enraged. Man is always enraged when it is suggested he is deficient. Out of this sense of his failure he is capable of deadly enmity. Human beings spend a lot of time in projecting themselves as righteous, perfect, and so on.

Another window on the matter of sin is given in Job 1:1–5 where Job’s sons and daughters held celebratory feasts together. Job, for his part, would offer sacrifices for his children related to these feasts because, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts’. The Puritans made much of this principle, namely that to sin against God causes a person to curse God. Paul goes close to saying this in Colossians 1:21 (*RSV*), ‘And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds’, which has also been translated, ‘And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind *by* wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled’ (*AV*). In Romans 5:10 Paul speaks of ‘while we were enemies’.

We will have occasion to return to this important matter of enmity, but for the present we will pursue our examination of filling our emptiness with things other than the fullness of God.

The Things With Which Man Fills the Emptiness

We have seen that when Man emptied his mind of God (Rom. 1:21–23, 28) it became ‘filled’ with ‘emptiness’. We saw that in treating God as empty of all that would be significant to them, those who rebelled went straight to the idols. This we have examined to some degree above. In Romans 1:19–31 we have seen that the outcome of idols brought them into a realm of moral evil of the worst kind. As they moved forward in idolatry so did their emptiness become wholly filled. Romans 1:29–31 talks of this, ‘They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.’ Romans 1:32 is to be noted here as most important, ‘Though they know God’s decree [*dikaïoma*] that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them’. That is, fallen Man knows he is going against the law of God but he delights in this.

Paul has another list of law-breakers in 1 Timothy 1:8–10:

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

If we examine these ‘fillings’ of empty people, we will see that not all of their evils are acts outside of corporate, dangerous, anti-social, anti-human operations. We may be thinking that only single individuals are operating on their own, which may well seem to be the case, yet in fact there is a burgeoning out of fierce, corporate cruelty such as in wars, mass-movements of destruction—religious and secular—and genocides. Paul describes us all as being ‘hated by men and hating one another’.

It is notable that when we examine the two lists of ‘fillings’ immediately above, they are—almost all of them—to do with relationships. As we might say, ‘the perversion of relationships’, relations which derived directly from God. Idolatry is the rejection of true relationships with God, substituting surrogate gods for God. With them come the perverted relationships of immorality, sexual perversions and the break-up of true relations which make for the deepest misery and suffering in families, communities and the wider society, even to national and international social behaviour. It is frightening to contemplate what human beings—like Cain—can do against Man as being in the image of God. This is seen in the Romans and 1 Timothy lists. If we add to them Christ’s own list in Mark 7:21–22 we see they are of the same evil relationships order—‘For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness’. Likewise the list of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19–21) are much of the same order, ‘Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger,

selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like'. If we would complete the list then we must add Ephesians 4:17–19 where again it is to do with relationships perverse and distorted from those God has given Man in creation, 'Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness'.

As our study proceeds we are able to see that when you empty out the knowledge of God as described in Romans chapter 1 (cf. Hosea 4:1–3, 6; 6:6; Jer. 9:23–24; John 17:3) then you refuse to drink of the fountain of living water, and everything dries up. When you hew reservoirs out of the rock, then they do not give living water. In their place is stagnant fluid and even it is not substantial. All things are of a Dead Sea. To know God is to be in union and communion with Him, and life is flowing both into and out of the person of faith. What we really need to see is that the life of the Triune God is a pure, moral and social one, which has as its goal the redeemed community where all relationships are of holiness, love, truthfulness, goodness and righteousness. The mind boggles at what a human being can be under the God who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in all the earth, as against the dark invader who was and is a liar and a murderer from the beginning.

At this point in our study we are not trying to give the remedy for the better infilling of Man, but to show by comparison the hideous infilling of evil. Thus infilled, Man can only be evil in these dreadful ways. The comparison, of course, is with Man in his Edenic innocence, for the glory of this delineates the dreadful evil that came upon him when he rejected God's ultimate plan to have His new heaven and new earth 'wherein dwells only righteousness'. To live in this ultimate renewal of all things requires that Man in union with God be filled unto all His fullness, as we will later be seeing.

THE WAY OF HUMANITY WHEN FILLED WITH 'ALL MANNER OF WICKEDNESS'

Humanity outside the knowledge of God must be in an indescribable state. Indeed, how many of us really believe this is the whole state as described in the lists above? If we were to do a detailed study of each word of all the evils, then we might be driven to despair or have secret thoughts that Man's case cannot really be so bad. We might admit there could be some exceptions, i.e. *some* humans are as bad, but generally speaking we do think in our hearts, 'Man is not as bad as that!' Looking out on the scene of time and history we think humanity is not all evil, not as evil as some theologians may make out. There are good men and women and children in this human race. Surely the doctrine of human depravity is extreme in its pronouncements!

Let us see whether much of what we have been saying about human beings is, in fact, extreme or otherwise. Do not humans on the whole live in acceptance and appreciation of law? Do they not disapprove of sin and crime? Do they try not to be evil but rather seek to do good? Is there much pity for weak, the poor and the deprived? To all these questions we must surely answer, 'Yes!' When we ask a further question, 'Is not the way of law really the way of human living on the whole?' we would again have to answer, 'Yes!' If asked, 'Is not humanity reasonably good and justice-espousing on the whole?' we would be inclined to agree, though many would disagree. What then of this whole matter of depravity?

Part of the answer will be to examine the moral dilemma of Man. In Proverbs 30:1–4 there is a curious passage:

The words of Agur son of Jakeh of Massa. The man says to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal: Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has

wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!

The speaker is saying, 'Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man.' He is rating a human being very highly and saying he, himself, is below the level of a true human being. A true human being is one who has 'learned wisdom' and has the 'knowledge of the Holy One'. How perceptive is this man, and how many there have been in history like him. How does he obtain this knowledge about himself? Job, when confronted by God with the wonder of creation and His purposes, confesses as follows:

I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes (Job 42:2-6).

Job, known as a righteous man, sees how far he has fallen short of being a wise man. He now sees how creaturely he is, and how much is God the Creator, and he is moved to repentance. Only with true knowledge of God comes knowledge of Man. Yes, Man is made in the image of God but when he withdraws himself into self-sufficiency then he is less than true Man. He is deficient. To devise a god or idol as a surrogate god is to insult and humiliate his Maker. Is this not depravity, however outwardly the Man may appear to be a decent person?

Do you remember Deuteronomy chapter 4 and Moses disquisition on law? Of course all nations have law, but they envy Israel for the law it has and so the superior god which is theirs, for who 'has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?' It is at this point we introduce the idea of a creation which has laws for its operations, its prohibitions against crime and evil, and the holding in check of Man who, unless checked, will 'be devils upon the earth'. In this regard theology speaks of 'the natural law',⁶ the law all humanity knows whatever its religion or legislation. Most theologians and some philosophers see natural law as being a part-expression of the law of God Himself, and the expression of universal law. Most nations see it as having universal application as in the War Crimes Tribunal, universal rejection of rape, child abuse, and so on. Natural law is accepted as holding humanity together in the presence of the evil it often experiences. When we move from creational law—i.e. law which is functional of, and to, creation—to revealed law such as found in Judaism, Christianity (see Romans 2:14-15) and, to a degree, in Islam, then God's law becomes superior to, and transcendent of, natural law. In fact the human race has experienced natural law over many millennia and trusts it to retain some order in a world of cruelty and evil. The New Testament has such passages as Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-14, Titus 3:1, whilst the Old Testament has Daniel 2:21, 4:17, and Proverbs 8:15.

It is unbelievable that we should think God allows Satan and his followers and fallen human beings to do what they like with His creation. This would be chaos. God has His creational link with Man, and the *imago dei*, though much in reverse, has a moral hold over Man's action, a hold which is very powerful. Man is neither an angel nor a devil. As Man he has to fight hard to retain his lawless autonomy. Every day he is confronted with God and true morality and the people of God—the people of redeeming and restorative grace. They confront him every day as light on a hill, as salt in the tasteless morality of Man. He cannot escape all these attacks upon his depravity. So far as accountability is concerned the principle of Ezekiel 18:20 shines like a brilliant beacon in all history—'The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.' Both Pharaoh and Abimelech knew it

⁶ Natural law is 'a moral order divinely implanted in mankind and accessible to all persons through human reason', J. Van Engen in an article entitled 'Natural Law' (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1984, pp. 751f.). It should be noted that 'natural law' is not 'the law of nature'.

was improper to take Abraham's Sarah into the harem. Man also has implanted in him the conscience by which he is conscious of law and of law's penal judgment. For the guilty the conscience is not always a trustworthy guide but through it he knows uneasiness, guilt and angst. It has a deep restraining power. Some Reformed theologians speak of 'common grace' as though there is a grace restraining sinful humanity from going to hideous excesses and it is true that, whatever term we may use for it, God's sovereignty is at work all the time in the affairs of men. Nebuchadnezzar discovered this:

At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured him who lives for ever; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What doest thou?' (Dan. 4:34-35).

What then do we conclude from this study of Man, self-emptied of knowing God and filled with the things of emptiness? Are the decent people we know in life and often admire, are they not fine folk on the whole? Sadly we answer, 'No! It is God's goodness that He keeps the human race in some kind of check.' Paul would answer with his charge that all men are under the power of sin and that 'none is righteous, no not one; no one understands [i.e. has knowledge of God], no one seeks after God'. Of course, when we meet the bulk of human beings we meet folk in whom God has already been working, and so we find them in different states. When we know and sense that God has been working, then we are not out to prove a proposition of all humanity being decadent. We know the long and wonderful history of the people of faith, and we are glad for every good work He has wrought in mankind; good works which do not justify the persons who did them, but the sign that human beings are not, all of them, devils, and that God is working in them.

When, however, it comes to testing people whom we would call 'decent' and even self-righteous people blinded by their own so-called righteousness, we may ask them questions, such as 'Is there not, within you, a kingdom which only you know and which you would not want others to know in the imaginations of your heart? Is there a part of you in which high arrogance rules? Are you not caught up in hubris from time to time? Are you never jealous; never cruel? Do you never have impure thoughts and imaginations? Do you never do concealed sins? Were you to be pressed to the limit might you not have rage like road-rage or any other "rage"? Might you not become homicidal or even suicidal? Are you—forsaking all idols—a true worshipper of God, honouring Him, grateful to Him, and living in His holy love?' All these questions, properly understood and answered, reveal what we are, essentially.

A CONCLUSION

It is time to face the fact of universal sin whatever other adjectives we may attach to it. When we know that there is 'the deceit of sin', 'the deceitful lusts', 'the lusts of the flesh', that 'all men are liars' and that the devil goes out 'to deceive the nations and has in fact deceived the whole world, then it is that the life of truly knowing God reveals itself as exceedingly wonderful. How can we know the battle we have with 'the flesh', daily, and not be convinced of the fallen nature of Man? How can we look out on a world system which is composed of 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life' and which is a thing of vanity or emptiness and argue that humanity is reasonably decent? If we were to make a record of all human evil, we would omit much which God would include. That is why we need, continually, to be reminded of the beauty of Man in his state of innocence and the dreadful pitch in evil to which he has come.

Only with regaining the knowledge of God can we understand how God is love. The unity of the Godhead as the Persons love one another, serve one another, give to one another

and receive from one another, all the time honouring one another, gives us some understanding of how humans—in the image of God—can live without war. Knowing that no human being of himself can deliver us from the dilemma of sin and the inevitability of death we look to the deliverance by another, but then that is part of continuing story whose title is ‘The Fullness of God and Man’.

THE EMPTINESS OF FALLEN MAN—3

OUT OF LIFE INTO DEATH

Introductory Note: In dealing with the emptiness of Man and his being 'filled with all manner of evil' it is impossible quantitatively to show the good things of his state of innocency on the one hand and on the other the bad things of his rebellion against God. Each can only be seen properly when they are dealt with in the light of the other. For example, when we seek in this paper to deal with Man's state of death we need to see it, as far as is possible, in the light of the life of God, and that life as it comes to Man, and vice versa. It is tempting to think we can pile up Man's sinful state and so compare it with his true creational and redeemed state. His 'being filled unto all the fullness of God' is dependent upon his knowledge of the love of Christ in God (Eph. 3:14–19), and that knowledge is linked with recognising the sinful state from which he is redeemed.

The matter of human death commences in Genesis 2:15–17:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

In this series of studies we have seen how wonderfully God made Man. To be in His image, to have the gift of God's various qualities and to be made the community of love in a unique way sets him out as a person and a community of love. His environment matched his being in a beautiful way. Created outside the garden of Eden he was placed in it to be prepared for a rich ministry to all the earth. Certainly we can say his life was purposeful and useful. The three verses above tell us that he was to be useful in the garden. The word for 'tilling' speaks of service to the garden, and the word 'keep' is often associated with service or worship of God. The essence of the passage is that whilst Man lives the way he has been created, in obedience, then his life will be rich for him. His one test of obedience is to heed a negative command—not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—was surely not a harsh one. It was for Man's benefit. Some have seen the prohibition as part of a probation. It certainly was a warning against death as well as a testing of obedience to the Creator. In fact it was the way to learn the only way to human fullness.

It has been argued that not having seen death they would not have known what it would be, the argument being that they would have been ignorant concerning death. This is a conjecture. The command would have been intelligible. Innocence does not equal ignorance but often brings remarkable understanding, as we often see in little children who can be said to be relatively innocent (Titus 1:15). Certainly the prohibition of God and the consequences of their sinning were made plain to them.

If we ask what was the meaning of death, especially *when* it was to have happened, i.e. 'for *in the day that you eat of it you shall die*', then it must have meant the cessation of Man's true life. Many readers claim this did not happen on the day

the primal couple ate of the tree. The answer to that must be, 'They did die'. Death in this case did not mean immediate, biological death, cessation of being, separation from life, and an inert body. Some argue that the death was a relational one, and surely this was the case. Paul speaks of something like this in 2 Corinthians 5:15, 'And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised'. Relational death is to be dead to another and alive to one's self, an example of this being human divorce. Even so, 'alive' here does not mean 'having full life' but plain self-centredness. We know that the temptation of the serpent was designed to break Man's love relationship with God. Man was to be independent of God and alive to himself. Yes, this was relational death.

Even so, death took place on the day the couple sinned. We know, biologically, that a human being begins to die from the day of his/her birth, even though it also begins to live. Death does not necessarily happen immediately. For the prediluvian humanity, life was a long process, but theologically it was a process to be ended by biological death. The process from cradle to the grave was death because it was loss of life, loss of the gift of life God had given Man, a gift which could be extended forever by accession to the tree of life (Gen. 2:17; 3:22–24). The shock of this death is seen in Genesis 3:7 where shame came to the couple and they were afraid of God and sought to hide themselves from Him. Some have asked, 'What indeed was that death?' and we answer, 'Human existence without relationship to God but with a relationship—desired or otherwise—with the serpent and his society'. It has been called *privatio*, or privation of the gifts God had given Man; a *privatio* which takes moral power and incentive from Man and all the moral qualities of the *imago dei*. These which were once his life-in-action are now inert. Man has become depraved.

Elsewhere we read that eternal life is to know God (John 17:3), that knowledge being a deep relationship with God in all His action. It is not simply that Man cannot know God but that he refuses to have the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:19–25, 28). His being mortal, i.e. under the sentence of death, is not because he is finite as against being infinite, but because he is a disobedient creature refusing the Creator as his true source and power of being. Desiring infinitude is desiring deity. This death is the refusal of his true way of being. A human being had true life when in fellowship with God and subject to Him. No question of death was in the offing for him. He had been given the choice of 'not dying' as over and against 'dying'.

To realise the truth that all humanity is dead to God and all bodies are therefore subject to physical death is a horrifying thought. It is surprising to see the large number of commentators who halt at the question, 'What is universal death such as spoken of in Genesis 2:17?' When Romans 5:12 is read the question is even more horrifying, 'Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—'. Death is certainly universal, but it is death that has its own terrible sting, for 'The sting of death is sin' (1 Cor. 15:56). It has been noted with the text of Romans 5:12 that Paul uses a parenthesis mark without filling in that parenthesis. It seems to me that we can reasonably supply the parenthesis by finishing his sentence, '—so obedience came into the world through one man [Jesus Christ] and life by obedience, and life spread to all men because all men obeyed [i.e. in Jesus]'. Whatever the case, sin (disobedience) is universal and so is death. Likewise obedience is universal and so is life, likewise, the outcome of obedience.

To contemplate a world of dead humanity is too horrible a task for any human to do. If a person's eyes are opened then the thought of universal death will seem shocking beyond measure. For the person to live all of his/her life in that state and

amidst that death, knowing all the time the trauma of the reality, is past comprehension. From time to time the deadliness of it breaks out in constant, persistent actions of sins and crimes and so frightening is it that some men, women and children become as zombies, unable to take the impact of the 'life' (i.e. 'death') about them.

Reading the Scriptures regarding human death and dead corporate humanity raises many questions, some of them marked with anger at the Creator. 'How could God be God, and called the God of love, and create humanity, only for it to come to this place of death?' 'Why did God not plan and bring into fruition a better state of Man, albeit Man made the wrong decision?' So the questions multiply and what answers can be given that could be satisfying? Of course many answers—some of them very good—have been given, but the scandal of death does not seem to be minimised by them. The quotes we see below are not answers to the human dilemma, i.e. Man created for life and living being given over to death and dying. Even so, they help to clarify the real situation. The quotes have primarily to do with Genesis 2:15–17:

John Calvin:

But it is asked, what kind of death God means in this place? It appears to me, that the definition of this death is to be sought from its opposite; we must, I say, remember from what kind of life man fell. He was, in every respect, happy; his life, therefore, had alike respect to his body and his soul, since in his soul a right judgment and a proper government of the affections prevailed, there also life reigned; in his body there was no defect, wherefore he was wholly free from death. His earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury. Death, therefore, is now a terror to us; first, because there is a kind of annihilation, as it respects the body; then, because the soul feels the curse of God. We must also see what is the cause of death, namely, alienation from God. Thence it follows, that under the name of death is comprehended all those miseries in which Adam involved himself by his defection; for as soon as he revolted from God, the fountain of life, he was cast down from his former state, in order that he might perceive the life of man without God to be wretched and lost, and therefore differing nothing from death. Hence the condition of man after his sin is not improperly called both the privation of life, and death. The miseries and evils both of soul and body, with which man is beset so long as he is on earth, are a kind of entrance into death, till death itself entirely absorbs him; for the Scripture everywhere calls those dead, who, being oppressed by the tyranny of sin and Satan, breathe nothing but their own destruction. Wherefore the question is superfluous, how it was that God threatened death to Adam on the day in which he should touch the fruit, when he long deferred the punishment? For then was Adam consigned to death, and death began its reign in him, until supervening grace should bring a remedy.¹

H. C. Leupold:

However, the imperfect *to'khal* with the negative *lo'* involves the strongest form of prohibition, which we have sought to reproduce by 'must.' The *kī* that follows the negative clause does not in this instance mean 'but,' for the clause preceding was imperative not declarative. In this instance the expression *beyôm*, 'in the day,' is to be taken very literally and not in the sense 'at the time,' a meaning that would not fit here. For the thought actually to be expressed is the instantaneous occurrence of the penalty threatened, which is also again expressed in part by the imperfect with absolute infinitive, 'dying thou shalt die' = 'certainly die.' This at once raises the question, 'Why was this penalty not carried out as threatened?' We answer: 'It was; if the Biblical concept of dying is kept in mind, as it unfolds itself ever more clearly from age to age.' Dying is separation from God. That separation occurred the very moment when man by his disobedience broke the bond of love. If physical death ultimately closes the experience, that is not the most serious aspect of the whole affair. The more serious is the inner spiritual separation. Oehler (T A T p. 254) rightly

¹ *A Commentary on Genesis* by John Calvin first published in English 1578. This edition reprinted from the Calvin Translation Society of 1847 in 1965 by The Banner of Truth Trust, London. Quotes from pages 127–8.

maintains: 'For a fact, after the commission of sin man at once stepped upon the road of death.' The contention that the Old Testament does not know spiritual death, because it does not happen to use that very expression, is a rationalizing and shallow one, which misconstrues the whole tenor of the Old Testament. The common claim raised in this connection, e. g. by Skinner : 'God, having regard to the circumstances of the temptation, changed His purpose and modified the penalty,' makes of God a mutable being, who, like a rash parent, first speaks severe threats, then sees Himself compelled by developments to modify His purpose. The explanation, 'He shall be mortal,' is based on the erroneous translation of the Septuagint.²

Derek Kidner:

The full implications of the warning, *thou shalt surely die* (AV, RV), will slowly unfold to the last pages of the New Testament. They are briefly discussed at 3:7; meanwhile it may be pointed out that these words do not necessarily imply that man was not naturally mortal. God 'alone has immortality' (I Tim. 6:16, RSV), and the presence of the tree of life in the garden indicates that if man is to share the boon it must be an added gift. As R. Martin-Achard has put it: 'Before the Fall, between Adam and death, which is part of his natural lot as an element in his human heritage, there stands the Living God; His presence is sufficient to ward death off . . .'. The translation of Enoch, 'that he should not see death' (Heb. 11:5), perhaps illustrates what God had prepared for man.³

F. Delitzsch represents an older way of dealing with the biblical text, and in our case it is quite profitable for it gives more of the rationale of the meaning and reason of the substance of Genesis 2:15–17. Whereas most commentators are concerned with the fact of the primal couple's fall, Delitzsch shows the true purpose of the prohibitive law and the gift it was to that couple, and to us:

Peter Lange (mainly quoting F. Delitzsch):

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.—According to Hoffman and Richers, ['good' and 'evil'] means good and bad simply. Delitzsch denies this, and rightly. 'The good,' says he, 'is obedience with its good, the bad is disobedience with its evil consequences. Here it must be remarked, that the conception of physical evil can be, at the most, only as a consequence of moral evil, and that, therefore, the ethical contrast is the main thing, though not to the exclusion of the physical side. *The tree*, in any case, was a tree that might produce this knowledge; that is, it was the tree of probation, through which Adam might come to a conscious distinction of good and evil, and, thereby, to a moral transition from the state of innocent simplicity into a state of conscious, religious virtue. Did he not sin, then he learned, in a normal way, to know the distinction between good and evil—the *good* as the actuality of believing obedience towards God, which was, at the same time, the maintaining of his own life in its self-command and freedom—the *evil*, as the possibility of an unbelieving and disobedient behaviour towards God, which must have for its consequent, slavish desire and death . . . For, 'not to know good and evil,' is the sign of the infantile childishness (Deut. i. 39) or of senile obtuseness (2 Sam. xix. 36); the conscious free choice of the one or the other indicates the most mature period of life (or that of the so-named *anni discretionis*, Is. vii. 15; Heb. v. 14). So to know good and evil, and to distinguish between them, is called the *charisma* or gift of a king (1 Kings iii. 9), the wisdom of the angel (2 Sam. xiv. 17), and, in its higher exercise, of God Himself (Gen. iii. 5, 22). By the tree of knowledge of good and evil man is to attain to a consciousness and to a confirmation of his freedom of choice, and, in fact (according to God's purpose in his determination for good), to a freedom of power—that is, to a true freedom available for the choice of good or its opposite. It was designed to bring out the necessary self-determination of a creature choosing freely, either for or against God, either for the God-willed good or the possible evil—and so to make perfect its independence. The very idea of a free personal

² *Exposition of Genesis*, vol. 1, Chapters 1–19, by H. C. Leupold, The Wartburg Press, Columbus, 1942, pp. 128–9.

³ *Genesis, An Introduction and Commentary* by Derek Kidner, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Tyndale Press, London, 1967, pp 64–5.

being carries with it the necessity that its relation to God be a relation of free love' (Delitzsch).⁴

We will have cause to come back to the principle Delitzsch has set out for us in his comment on Genesis 2:17.

DEATH TO THE WHOLE WORLD: WHAT THEN OF LIFE?

In speaking of all humanity becoming empty at the Fall, have we exaggerated the whole situation of that fall? Certain elements in God's treatment of Man in bringing him universally into death seem to be ameliorated by God Himself. It is true that God expelled the primal couple from Eden, but then that was for their betterment. Having sinned, had they eaten of the tree of life then there would have been no escape from an endless, evil future. It is true that the outcome of death was punishment enough. We ought to recognise that it was punishment, as was also the setting out of altered marital relationships, suffering for the woman in childbirth and the land cursed for Adam's sake. It seems God had Adam and Eve in the forefront of His mind and intentions. He killed animals and made appropriate skin clothing for them to cover their shame. He pronounced what we call 'the proto-evangel' in terms of the crushing of the serpent. He did not utterly reject and abandon the two under sentence of death.

What is more He did not renounce the mandate of Genesis 1:26–30 nor the blessing which accompanied it. He related to the new family, even to reasoning with Cain the murderer, even to ameliorating his punishment. Provision was made for worship and sacrifice as part of it, which was sufficient for fallen Man to worship God and know forgiveness of sins, e.g. the sacrifices of Cain and Abel were God's provision for their guilt. See especially Genesis 4:6–7. We enquire into Abel's calling as a prophet and his being a man of love and of faith (1 John 3:11–12; Heb. 11:4). How, when humans are dead, can such a one have life as was evidently the case? It certainly was the case and so we are introduced into the reality of 'the sons of God' (Gen. 4:25–26). We are appraised of Enoch who never saw death (Heb. 11:5; Jude 14f.). Man, then, was under the grace of God. None of this prevented the whole world being filled with violence and corruption, and so much so that it had to come under the judgment of the Flood. Noah was certainly a person who was not in the throes of death but one who 'was a righteous man, blameless in his generation' who 'found grace in the eyes of the LORD'. How did men such as Abel, Enoch, Noah and Elijah have life amid universal sin and death?

In the story of Cain and Abel, God meets Cain's anger with, 'If you do well shall you not be accepted?' which Wenham in his commentary on Genesis translates, 'Is there not forgiveness?'⁵ We can understand Genesis 4:25–26, especially when 'At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD,' even if at that time the community had deteriorated so much that, 'The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. It was His grace that He did not then abandon the human race but judged and punished it. Likewise, following the Flood He smelled the pleasing odour of Noah's sacrifice and said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground

⁴ *Genesis, or, The First Book of Moses*, by J. P. Lange, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, nd, p. 206.

⁵ Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary, Word Books, Waco, 1987, p. 104, and this shows that mercy and grace were known in those days.

because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done'.

We deduce from all we have seen under this last heading that God's plan to bring Man to the wisdom and maturity of which Delitzsch spoke in the quote above has been the one which has taken centuries of long-suffering, patience and endurance to bring Man to His side and defeat the serpent and all his tribe. It is therefore comforting to describe part of John's vision as he sets it down in Revelation 7:9–12:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.'

Of course here we are anticipating the great theme of 'Life out of death' and it seems we need to do this every so often to relieve ourselves of the effects of speaking so much about human emptiness as we have been discussing it. In such discussion we might grow pessimistic about God's outcome to history when, of course, He is sovereign over all actions which happen, and has His purposes in what seem to be moral failures. For this reason we will trace not only death out of life, but life out of death. First, however, we must see death and life from the viewpoint of God's 'everlasting covenant'. Here we are taking into account the pre-history of Genesis chapters 1 – 11 which related to: (i) the Creational Covenant and then in sequence to; (ii) the Abrahamic Covenant; (iii) the Sinaitic Covenant; (iv) the Davidic Covenant; and (v) the New Covenant.

The Covenants, Life and Death

In a paper such as this we have no hope of covering the five covenants we have just mentioned, above. All five are called 'everlasting covenants' and are unilateral, that is, they are made by God in grace for human well-being and life. It is necessary here to mention them because they show that God has worked—and does work—unilaterally for the good of Man out of His love and grace. When, then, Man steps out of line in his covenantal relationship with God he becomes involved in states of death, the universal one of which was occasioned by the temptation and fall in Eden. In spite of covenant-breaking, God is the God of love, long suffering, mercy and forgiveness, as told to us in Exodus 34:6–7.

If the human race is understood by references to Psalm 2 then it will be seen Man—as an entity of nations—insists on being God's enemy. In history God gives promises to the nations that those who bless Abraham His servant will in turn be blessed by Him. We would expect, therefore, to find persons and peoples who have come out of death into proper, human life. When, in addition, God chooses one nation, Israel, to be the priest-nation among all the nations, to witness to all those nations of His being the Most High God and how He should be worshipped, then we will expect to find many who have emerged out of death. In Israel people would be experiencing the life God gives, and the law by which this life would be lived and even maintained.

When, therefore, we talk about 'life' and 'death' in the context of Israel, it will be a different kind of talking for these are the people of God, His special people, His

beloved community (*qahal*), His *am segullah*—His beloved possession. If this is understood among the nations then it is possible they will realise their ‘in-death’ situation and see that God is not God of the dead but of the living (cf. Matt. 22:32) and that He will, through grace, bring them out of death into life. This has been happening since Israel’s prophesied Messiah—Jesus by name—has come to this world, died for it and has His servants working for him among the nations. This section is really pre-empting the great story we will be following regarding Man’s present death and his liberation into life. We are first of all taking those New Testament writings which strongly delineate Man’s death by speaking of God’s free gift of life. We will begin with the Johannine writings which so emphasise both death and life.

THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS CONCERNING DEATH AND LIFE

In his Gospel John points to the creating work of the Word, stating ‘In him was life’ or ‘That which has been made was life in him’ (1:4, *RSV* footnote). Opposition to him was shown in that ‘he came to his own home, and his own people received him not’ (1:11). This was relational death in action. Later it revealed its ‘hateful and hating’ death-self (15:18 – 16:4; cf. Titus 3:3b) and crucified him. Jesus had come to bring his people into new birth and by it into the Kingdom of God (1:12–13; 3:1–15). This included eternal life through his death but many prefer to live within the death that came to primal Man (John 3:14–21). The double pronouncement of life and God’s wrath is stated in 3:36, ‘He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him’.

The Samaritan woman at the well is told (4:10; cf. Jer. 2:13) that he has come to give her ‘living water’, and he adds (4:13–14), ‘Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’. In a passage in which Jesus declares that God is his Father, and has given him—Jesus—to have life in himself and to be the judge of all the world, he makes the powerful declaration (5:24), ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life’. Here one is to believe in the Father who has sent Jesus and the incredible statement that the one believing ‘has passed from death to life’, thus reversing the death-sentence of Genesis 2:17! To this he adds, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live’ (5:25).

Time and again Jesus speaks not simply of restoration to the life Man lost but the offer of eternal life. In John 6:27–69 he represents himself as both the bread and water of life. This stirs wonder and protest in the hearers, and they react when he says that he is greater than the manna of the wilderness, that he will give his flesh for the life of the world and that they eat of his flesh and drink of his blood which was a way of speaking well known to his hearers. The import of those words is such that many of his own disciples leave him. Even so, Peter says (v. 68) in answer to Jesus’ question, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.’ It is the thought of eternal life which occupies their minds and retains their loyalty to their Master.

In 8:12–59 he proclaims himself as the ‘light of the world’ in contrast to those who walk in darkness. Later he describes this darkness as not knowing the truth. He warns them against dying in their sins—something they would not believe regarding

themselves. He then takes them back to their origins, to their father the devil, showing that he was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. They are yet in their sins and so will try to kill him. In this way they show the death that is in them and in which they are. The promise of eternal life does not figure with them.

In 9:5 he says, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world', and he heals the blind man. The Pharisees call him a sinner for healing on the Sabbath. His reply is, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind'. Those in death faced life but were not sensible of their death. Jesus confirmed them in their darkness, 'If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see," your guilt remains'.

In chapter 10 the moral battle with evil is made clear in the figure that he is the good shepherd. Verse 10 is outstanding for our purposes, 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'. Without doubt Satan is the thief and murderer, having stolen Man's life in Eden and committed them unto death. Now is the moment in all history when the Son of God has come to change all this. The stream of the faithful throughout history has depended upon this time of his coming. In place of death he is bringing life. All who believe in him will have abundant life for he will lay down his life for them—'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand'. It is in 11:25 that Jesus makes the great pronouncement to Martha. 'Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."' His raising of Lazarus from the dead was the last straw for the leaders of the Jews: he must die. So was the Adamic death and the Adamic darkness expressing itself. As we know, also, from the Synoptic Gospels, the battle was now joined. Eternal life was to flow from Jesus' cross and resurrection.

In his Letters John continues the themes of light and darkness, eternal life and death. Confirming the teaching against the devil he says in his First Letter (3:8), 'He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil', and in 3:14 adds, 'We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.' This is a most important statement, throwing light as it does upon Genesis 2:17. In 4:9–10 John speaks of God's saving love, 'In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [propitiation] for our sins.' Again, in 5:9–12 the personal possession of life is the truth about believers in Christ:

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has borne witness to his Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.

The two further Letters of John are brief and concentrate on following the truth which is more or less equated with living in love which in the First Letter is not walking in darkness and death.

The Book of the Revelation cannot be fully treated in a paper such as this because of the

matter of space. Chapter 1 sets a brilliant introduction with the vision of Christ in which he says to John who swooned at the sight of him (1:17–18; cf. 2:8), ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades’. That is enough to set forth the matter of life. In 7:17 the redeemed are led by the Lamb to springs of living water. In 21:6–8 the One seated on the throne says to John:

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.

The ‘second death’ is something we will need later to explain, but the main reference to it is in 2:11 and 20:6, 14. It relates to all whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb (13:8; 20:15).

In 22:1–5 John is shown the river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, proceeding down the middle of the eternal City, and the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. He who desires should come and ‘take the water of life without price’ (22:17).

The bulk of the Book is given over to the breaking of the seals, to the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath, all which are to do with the rebellious nations and anti-God people of the nations (cf. Ps. 2; 110). Judgment and punishment come to all who are in the death of Genesis 2:17 and their own sins (Eph. 2:1–3). Seemingly triumphant in their own wilfulness they are being fitted for the second death.

THE APOSTOLIC VIEW OF MAN IN DEATH AND WITHOUT LIFE

We have to a great degree covered the apostolic view of Man ‘living’ in death. The apostles were those who wrote or helped to write the Gospels and the materials Christ taught them in regard to Man-in-sin, and also those who were taught by the Holy Spirit as Jesus said he would do in bringing to their remembrance all he had said and done, and so would lead them into all truth. One of his great works would be to convince the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, which he so evidently did in the early church and has continued to do down through the centuries. In the past two papers we have spoken of the lists of human sins as stated by Jesus in Mark 7:21–22, by Paul in Romans 1:19–32, 1 Timothy 1:8–11, Ephesians 4:17–19 and the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21. These all convey pictures of the dread-

ful condition of Man-in-sin throughout history and the deathful state in which he existed and still exists. We recalled the case of the promiscuous widow in 1 Timothy 5:6 who was described as ‘dead even while she lives’. So it is with the wider view of Man-in-death: so often human beings are dead while they believe they live. They congratulate themselves on being good and righteous when they are steeped in sin and evil.

Man-in-Death Existentially

In this section we are not so much concerned to show Man is a sinner, but to look at his existential pain and suffering because of his sinfulness. On the whole the apostolic understanding of creation, God, Man, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Community

of faith (the church), created life, sin, believing and unbelieving humanity, the present and the future—including heaven—hold together very well. It is not our intention to show here how that is. At the same time we wish to share what insights we have in relation to Man-in-death. Such seeing is not to exercise a critical mind, or rejoice over judgment, but to share in the compassion of God which is on the sinner:

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord GOD; so turn, and live (Ezek. 18:30–32).

Well did Jesus say, ‘Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents’ (Luke 15:10).

From the matter of Genesis 2:17, which speaks of universal death through primal Man’s disobedience and other intimations of eternal death or ‘second death’, fallen Man must suffer deeply. In Proverbs chapter 10 onwards for many chapters are ‘The Proverbs of Solomon’ where endlessly the writer speaks of the blessings of the faithful as against the misery of the transgressor, and he is speaking within a covenantal situation, to sinners who are against that covenant. Indeed a frightening picture of the sinner is set out. The *KJV* rendering of 13:15 is, ‘Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors *is* hard’. This is an immutable fact in the experience of Man by nature of the case. The memory of beautiful Eden cannot be erased. What once comforted now taunts by virtue of human guilt. It is not simple and satisfying to be dead in one’s sins and trespasses. This is the hard way to live—the most painful of all.

It is difficult to live in sin because it is against the image of God which Man must be—whatever. Here, where the image is in reverse, there is deprivation of the love, joy and peace, and the domination of hatred, misery and restlessness. The terrifying slide into destruction shown in the first chapter of Romans is always proceeding. Cain was shown that sin was a deadly power, crouching like a lion, ready to leap on him and destroy him. Hebrews 2:14–15 speaks of ‘the power of death’ as wielded by the devil so that men and women all their lifetime are in bondage through the fear of that death. Someone has written on the two verses of Hebrews 2 that men are afraid to die, not because they *have* to die but because *they deserve to die*. John wrote, ‘There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love’ (1 John 4:18, *KJV*).

Again, Man-in-death may have bouts of remorse springing from some recognition of sin. Paul speaks of two forms of grief, ‘For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death’ (2 Cor. 7:10): ‘worldly grief produces death’ is excruciatingly painful to Man. It can be likened to dry ice given to a thirsty person. Paul says that he labours for wages which in the ultimate are death (Rom. 6:23). Somehow that hideous deathful end is ever with humanity, and even if they will not agree such an end is coming there is a consciousness of it, and Satan is always the mocking Accuser. The reality of Ezekiel 18:4 is undeniable. No matter how far fallen is a person, God’s words are always in his depths, ‘Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die’ (Ezek. 18:4). Ezekiel 18:20 rings through history, ‘The soul that sins shall die’. Man is not a victim of sin, but the perpetrator of it. He is accountable for it. It is not because another has eaten sour grapes that his own

teeth are set on edge. To the contrary: it is he who has eaten sour grapes. Whilst there are those occasions when human beings victimise one another, yet the main reality is Man is in death because of his own sin. James 1:13–15 tells the story, ‘Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death.’ It is this present experience of death we are trying to convey via our hard copy. Man, always justifying himself to the last degree, tries to avoid confessing that the sting of death is sin, and that the power of sin is through the law by which comes the knowledge of sin (1 Cor. 15:56; Rom. 3:20). How deep the pain of it in the life of Man in sin and the fear of death!

CONCLUSION: THE UNIVERSAL HORROR OF SIN AND DEATH

Whilst we can comprehend something of the personal, existential anguish brought to human beings by sin and death, it is shocking to view the entire human scene in regard to the universal sin–death action. Before the Flood ‘the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence . . . for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth’ (Gen. 6:11–12), and now in the last age similar corruption is present as Christ foretold it would be (Matt. 24:4–14). In this environment universal sin and death present a horrible prospect. The Book of the Revelation informs us of the fearful judgments upon the kingdom of sin and death (cf. Rev. 16:10–11; Col. 1:13). This is the concrete world in which we live. Only because we believe Christ’s words and live in this age by faith (2 Cor. 5:7) do we see the real situation—that Christ is the true Ruler of the age, its worldly rulers and Satan himself. What we have not done specifically in this paper is to discuss the matter of human guilt. We will do this in a later study, noting now that Man’s existential pain is certainly linked with his guilt.

The whole purpose of this present study is to take a further view of the emptiness of all evil, its power and Man-in-death, in order that we will not play down the human predicament. To do this is to diminish the necessity of the redeeming cross and the nature of it as the love of God. Because all evil has deceit built into it we must be constantly on the alert lest ecclesiastical ‘business’ and other diversions so take our attention that we fail to proclaim the gospel, to regard ‘as of first importance’ what we have also received, ‘that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures [and] that he was buried, [and] that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures’ (1 Cor. 15:3–4). We must therefore be constantly in line with the Holy Spirit whose business it is—along with our obedience—to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgement.

Only by this work can the human race emerge from the deadliness of sin and death.

THE EMPTINESS OF FALLEN MAN—4

WORSHIP AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

We have been considering Man's emptiness through the Fall and the things with which he seeks to fill himself. In our last study we saw the immensity of death in which fallen Man lives or, rather, exists. We see Man's predicament when, created primarily for worship, he will not worship God. Genesis 3:1–24 in principle is paralleled by Romans 1:19–25. By 'worship' we mean serving God in His will and plan for His creation, and from our hearts honouring Him, adoring Him, sharing Creator–creature relationship in communion and with thanksgiving. Such worship will cover all of life, including those times when we personally pray and praise in His presence as single persons or as a community.

We take it as axiomatic that we were created primarily for worship since it was for that which our lives exist. To know God is to worship Him. Outside of worship there is only death. On the day Man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he/they died. When those who knew God (Rom. 1:19–25)¹ refused to honour (glorify) Him and be grateful to Him for His essential being and for their creation, then there and then their intimate communion with God was broken and the circuit of life terminated. The drive and ability to worship was not erased but expressed itself in false worship of self and idols. Fallen Man sought to establish a different circuit of worship. We have discussed the death-ness of idolatry. Even so, fallen Man in his so-called autonomy goes through the motions of death. It is the matter of that deathful worship and deathful relationships which we now seek to explore. To do this we need to examine Genesis 2:25, and 3:1–11, 21 in their significance.

NAKEDNESS AND CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND WORSHIP

In Genesis 2:25 it is said, 'the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed'. This would be taken to mean that in innocency the first couple would take this state to be normal and correct. It is significant that this point is mentioned. All animals of course were in the same state—without clothing—and have ever remained in that state by nature. In Genesis 3 we have the account of the serpent testing out their loyalty (obedience) to their Creator and the account of their failure to hold to their true relationship with Him—God. What concerns us here are three passages: (i) Genesis 2:25; (ii) Genesis 3:7; and (iii) Genesis 3:1 (cf. 3:21).

Genesis 3:7 described the immediate result of the sin of the two in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, 'Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons'. Putting this together with Genesis 2:25 we conclude that 'they were now

¹ It is often queried as to whether Paul is speaking of Adam in the generic sense or especially of the Gentiles at some point of their history. This can probably not be determined but the rebellion is essentially of the same type.

naked and ashamed'. Most commentators differentiate between shame and guilt, but they must at least be linked. The quote in Daniel 12:2 in regard to the idea of *shame* is a powerful one, 'And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to *shame* and everlasting contempt'. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has the following to say regarding 'shame' in Genesis 2:25:

And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Shame only exists as a result of the knowledge of the division of man, of the division of the world in general, therefore also from knowledge's perception of its own division. Shame is the expression of the fact that we no longer accept the other person as the gift of God. Shame expresses my passionate desire for the other person and the knowledge that belongs to it that the other person is no longer satisfied just to belong to me but desires something from me. Shame covers me before the other because of my own evil and of his evil, because of the division that has come between us. Where the one accepts the other as the companion given to him by God, where he is content with understanding himself as beginning from and ending in the other and in belonging to him, man is not ashamed. In the unity of unbroken obedience man is naked in the presence of man, uncovered, revealing both body and soul, and yet he is not ashamed. Shame only comes into existence in the world of division. Knowledge, death, sexuality—here and in the next chapter we are dealing with the connexion between these three primaeva words of life.²

When it comes to Genesis 3:7 there is a full thesis by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. One paragraph is here inserted:

This division in *tob* and *ra* must first of all express itself in Adam's relation to Eve. Eve, the other person, had been to Adam the bodily form of the given limit whom he acknowledged in love, i.e. in the undivided unity of his devotion and whom he loved in her very nature as limit, i.e. *because* she was human and yet 'another person'. Now that he has transgressed the limit, he knows for the first time that he was limited. At the same time he no longer accepts the limit as the grace of God the Creator but hates it, looking upon it as the envy of God the Creator. In the same act he has transgressed the limit that the other person had embodied for him. Now he no longer sees the limit of the other person as grace but as the wrath, the hatred, the envy of God. This means that he no longer sees the other person in love. He sees him over against himself, at variance with himself. Now the limit is no longer grace, holding man in the unity of his creaturely and free love; it is discord. Man and woman are divided. This means two things. First of all, man makes use of his share in the woman's body; more generally, one man makes use of his right to the other and puts forward his claim to the possession of the other, thereby denying and destroying the other person's creatureliness.³

Gerhard von Rad's comment is:

'Then the eyes of both were opened.' The words of the serpent are repeated. Something really new is disclosed to them; but they have not become like gods. They have not been able to take into their life what God withheld from them before. Scarcely was it grasped before it caused disruption to the very foundations of their creaturely existence ('stripped them of their glory' [Delitzsch]). But they do not react to the loss of their innocence with a spiritual consciousness of guilt; rather, they are afraid of their nakedness. For the first time, in their shame they detect something like a rift that can be traced to the depths of their being. Shame always seeks to conceal, it is afraid of 'nakedness,' and to this degree it can also be given a positive evaluation. But the narrative sees it above all as the sign of a grievous disruption which governs the whole being of man from the lowest level of his corporeality.⁴

² *Creation and the Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1–3*, SCM, London, 1959, p. 63. *Creation and Fall and Temptation* have also been published together by McMillan, New York, 1959.

³ *ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, SCM Press, London, 1981, p. 91.

Cuthbert A. Simpson in *The Interpreter's Bible*, comments on Genesis 3:7:

The perfidy of the serpent was immediately apparent on the eating of the fruit. Far from becoming **like God, knowing good and evil** (vs. 5), they knew only that **they were naked**. The concreteness of the statement is characteristically Semitic. The nakedness of which they hitherto 'were not ashamed' (2:25) becomes an intolerable indecency, demanding that it be covered now that the consciousness of sex has sprung to life within them. It must not be supposed that J⁵ regarded the sexual relationship as in itself evil. Having been ordained by God (cf. 2:18, 21–23), this could only be good. But it had been infected with evil when man in his desire for power had disobeyed God. This had impaired the relationship between man and God and so had thrown the relationship between the man and his wife into disorder.

Whatever the context of the earlier myth may have been, in the present form of the story the actors, the first man and the first woman, constitute the whole human race. The relationship between them thus symbolized all human relationships. It is difficult to say whether J would have consciously subscribed to the statement that the sexual relationship is the basic human relationship. It is unlikely that he thought in such terms. Nevertheless in view of the psychological penetration which marks the story as a whole there can be little doubt that he was, however inarticulately, aware of the definitive character of this relationship. The representation that the awakening of sex consciousness was accompanied by a consciousness of guilt thus contains a recognition of the fact that all human relationships are disordered. Alienation from God has brought with it alienation from man. Loneliness is the specter which haunts unredeemed humanity.⁶

H. C. Leupold has the following comment:

The act of sin having developed into a full-blown deed, which manifested itself outwardly, there now follows in v. 7–13 a description of the immediate effects of this sin upon man. The first noticeable effect is shame. Both are equally guilty; both experience the same result. Here is one of the saddest anticlimaxes of history: 'they eat, they expect marvelous results, they wait—and there grows on them the sense of' (Procksch). They now have a knowledge of good and evil, but not as a result of having remained steadfast in the good but from the low level of sin, as it has been aptly put. The immediate gain of the experience of sin is so utterly sordid . . . Here it is the direct reaction of a guilty conscience. The good Lord with definite purpose lets this effect be felt first in order that the baseness and the utter worthlessness of all of sin's achievements may be made apparent. To shield themselves from one another's gaze they fashion 'girdles' for themselves from 'fig leaves' . . . That the sense of shame should concentrate itself around that portion of the body which is marked by the organs of generation, no doubt has its deeper reason in this that man instinctively feels that the very fountain and source of human life is contaminated by sin. The very act of generation is tainted by sin.⁷

Edward J. Young's comment is:

Before the fall the first man and woman saw things as they actually were. Wherever they cast their eyes they beheld the world that their good God had created and they saw all things as His creation. To Him they raised their hearts in adoration and praise, for He had granted to them a full and rich world in which to live. Thus beholding the world and all things as coming from the hand of God, they had seen their nakedness as something which came from Him and as something which produced no shame in their hearts.

The knowledge which they now have is one which judges everything from a false standpoint. It sees all from a perverted position. Basically it is mistaken about all that it would interpret. And so

⁵ 'J' stands for the Yahwist writer in the documentary hypothesis of the writing of Genesis. This historico-critical approach claims that there were a number of writers who worked on the text from their special point of view and so the document was produced by them as a work of the number of writers. The name YAHWEH or LORD was linked with the God of covenant.

⁶ Cuthbert, A. Simpson, *The Book of Genesis in The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1952, p. 506.

⁷ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, The Warburg Press, Columbus, 1942, p. 154.

nakedness becomes a matter of shame. As unfallen creatures the man and his wife had rejoiced in all things. Now, because of sin, they can really rejoice in nothing.⁸

Lange's Commentary on Genesis 3:7 is:

. . . it is true that man, from his demoniacal striving after something too great for him, falls back into a beastly laxity of behavior, which, however, even here shame contends against, and seeks to veil. As the death of man, in its historical aspect, stands in counter-relation to the human generations in their historical aspect, so it would seem that whilst the first presentiment of death, in the first human consciousness of guilt, must give a shock to men, there would also be, in connection with this foreboding of death, another presentiment of a call to sexual propagation; but along with this, and in order to this, there would be a feeling which would seek to veil it, with its acts and organs, as by a sacred law. This modesty, or bashfulness, of man, however, relates not merely to natural generation, but also to the spiritual and the churchly; as though all origin demanded its covering—its creative night. The commendation of the first growths of intelligence in a man's soul produces a feeling of blushing diffidence, and so, too, the churchly birth hath its reverent and modest veiling. When, therefore, along with the presentiment of death, and of the generic or sexual destiny (which, nevertheless, we cannot make independent of man's historical death), there comes in the feeling of shame in the first men, so also, as a symbolic expression therefor, there enters into them, along with the guilt, an inner death, and the sense of the want of renovation.⁹

Bruce Waltke's commentary is also helpful:

7. the eyes of both of them were opened. Ironically, their opened eyes bring them shame. This knowledge of good and evil is not a neutral state, desired maturity, or an advancement of humanity, as is commonly argued. God desires to save humans from their inclination for ethical autonomy. Because Adam and Eve have attained this sinful state, they must not eat of the tree of life and are consigned forever to the forbidden state of being inclined to choose their own code of ethics (Gen. 3:22). By contrast, in God's kingdom one chooses to know God and live upon his word (Deut. 8:3).

naked [arum]. In the Bible [arum], usually describes someone stripped of protective clothing and 'naked' in the sense of being defenceless, weak, for humiliated (Deut. 28:48; Job 1:21; Isa. 58:7). With an awareness of guilt and a loss of innocence, the couple now feels shame in their naked state. Their spiritual death is revealed by their alienation from one another, symbolized by sewing fig leaves together for barriers, and by their separation from God, symbolized by hiding among the trees.¹⁰

Meredith G. Kline in a Genesis commentary has this to say:

6 *She took . . . and ate.* In expression of her new anti-faith and her consent to Satan's theology, the woman risked the divine threat. *And she . . . gave.* Cf. 1 Tim. 2:14. From apologete for God to devil's advocate! *And he ate.* By this disobedience of the one man sin entered into the world and death passed upon all men (cf. Rom. 5:12ff.). **7** *They knew they were naked.* The similarity of *erummim* ('naked'; cf. *arummim*, 2:25) and *arum* ('subtle', 3:1) suggests a word-play: the kind of Godlikeness that resulted from following the serpent's counsel was religiously a devil-likeness. The sense of shame attaching to physical nakedness (cf. 2:25) manifested consciousness of inner nakedness, the stripping of the glory of holiness from the soul. *Made themselves aprons.* Sin had side-tracked human inventiveness down a frustratingly remedial road.¹¹

Bonhoeffer's comments on Genesis 3:7, in his book *Creation and Fall*, take up some

⁸ Edward J. Young, *Genesis 3: A Devotional & Expository Study*, Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1966, p. 69.

⁹ *Genesis* from John Peter Lange's *Critical, Theological and Homiletical Commentary on the Bible*, trans. by Philip Schaff and published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh (no date, but about mid-19th century production), p. 231.

¹⁰ *Genesis: A Commentary* with Cathi J. Fredricks, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2001, p. 92.

¹¹ Meredith G. Kline, 'Genesis' in *The New Bible Commentary Revised*, eds D. Guthrie et al., IVP, Leicester, 1970, p. 85.

four pages and are most valuable. Here I quote him further, in part, and recommend reading his book, fully:

‘The end of the ways of God is bodiliness’. It does not say ‘they knew and recognized good and evil’, but *the eyes of both were opened, and they saw that they were naked*. Can we really understand the whole story from here by saying that the point at issue is the origin of the love of man and woman? Can we say that eating of the tree of knowledge has been the great, proud, liberating act of man by means of which he has won the right of love and of creating life? Was the knowledge of good and evil essentially the new knowledge of a boy become man? In the last resort, was Adam’s only mistake not to storm straight away from the tree of knowledge to the tree of life in order to eat also of its fruit? The correct part of all this is that the point at issue here is the problem of sexuality. For Adam, who lives in unity, the knowledge of good and evil is the impossible knowledge of the duality and the rupture of the whole. The comprehensive expression of this duality is *tob* and *ra*, in our language full of pleasure and therefore good, full of pain and therefore evil. And it is just this combination of pleasurable and good that takes all the weight from the moralistic interpretation. In the divided, fallen world the pleasurable is ultimately as serious as the ‘good’, since both have equally fallen from the primeval unity. Both exist only in duality and do not find the way back to unity . . .

This avid passion of man for the other person first comes to expression in sexuality. The sexuality of the man who has transgressed his limit is the refusal to recognize any limit whatever; it is the boundless passion to be without a limit. Sexuality is the passionate hatred of every limit, it is arbitrariness to the highest degree, it is self-will, it is avid, impotent will for unity in the divided world. It is avid because it knows of man’s common humanity from the origin onwards, and impotent because together with his limit man has finally lost the other person. Sexuality desires the destruction of the other person as creature; it robs him of his creatureliness, violates him as well as his limit, hates grace. Man’s own life is to preserve and propagate itself in this destruction of the other person. Man is creative in destroying. In sexuality mankind preserves itself in its destruction. Unrestrained sexuality, like uncreative sexuality, is therefore destruction *par excellence*. Thus it is an insane acceleration of the Fall; it is self-affirmation to the point of self-destruction. Passion and hate, *tob* and *ra*—these are the fruit of the tree of knowledge.¹²

SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THE MATTER OF NAKEDNESS

I have sympathy for commentators who have to exegete the text rather than just comment upon it. Exposition is notoriously difficult where the text does not say explicitly what is the sense of the verse. In the case of Genesis 2:25 we are simply told the innocent couple were naked in the garden and unashamed of their nakedness. This verse has to be read in the light of Genesis 3:7, 11, 21. To my mind most commentaries I have read do not satisfactorily bring out the whole story of the couple regarding nakedness, shame, human clothing and then the grace of clothing provided by God to help restore some dignity to their fallen state. Many commentaries do not even treat Genesis 2:25 when it must be of deep significance. To be naked in innocency must be normal, and this is stated undoubtedly to clear the way for showing the difference about nakedness in human fallenness. Even so, in itself, there is nothing to be ashamed of where there is innocence. Nakedness shows how different are the male and female bodies but when innocent the two are not affronted by the differences. We, here, need to pre-empt something of what we will later say of the power of redemption to restore—

¹² Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, pp. 78–80.

even if only in part—that dignity which is commensurate with the marital state, that is, the state of the redeemed. By this we mean marriage without shame, brought about by the forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, and holiness by regeneration.

Of all the commentaries cited above, Peter Lange is the one who speaks of the shock of the Fall. It must be seen as most strange that the big thing of the Fall—so to speak—is that of the discovery of nakedness. Their eyes saw no strangeness in nudity until they were opened by eating of the forbidden fruit. When this happened they did not become as God in whose image they had been made, but they saw themselves as naked. So shameful did it seem to them that they immediately made loin-covers from leaves. Their shame must have been intense. Why was this so? In order to understand we must remember that God had said, ‘In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’.

Man, then, had died on that day—the couple to God and each to the other. Biological existence was not terminated but death happened. We may call it relational death to God and to each other. This was—and is—no little thing. Relationships had died, but also they had died to what they had been. Being in the image of God they were now acting differently: they were even acting contrary to their former ways when they had been in innocent life. Today we lay much emphasis on the words ‘stress’ and ‘trauma’. The first couple were now in deep trauma and heavy stress. The very configurations of their spiritual and moral existence were deeply altered. In their rejection of God they had rejected their formation as being the image of God. Meredith Kline’s comment above is, ‘the kind of Godlikeness that resulted from following the serpent’s counsel was religiously a devil-likeness’. Their whole beings were now warped. We can say that their psychology changed. The way they saw everything, their understanding of God, themselves and creation underwent a perverse change which could be called ‘deformation’ or ‘decreation’. Prior to their dreadful choice they saw all things in pulchritude, that is, for their own beauty (*Encarta*: ‘physical beauty’); now, having fallen, they saw it in prurience which in the *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 2, p. 1698), in its third meaning is described as, ‘Given to the indulgence of lewd ideas; impure-minded’. *The Encarta World English Dictionary* (p. 1515) says, ‘having or intended to arouse an unwholesome interest in sexual matters’. Paul’s statement in Titus 1:15 can be likened with these two words we have used, ‘To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted’.

It is here we need to insert the word ‘concupiscence’ which relates to prurience. *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (vol. 1, p. 391), describes it ‘1. Vehement desire; in *Theol.* use, desire for “the things of the world”. 2. *esp.* Libidinous desire, sexual appetite, lust ME [Middle English]’. Theologically it is claimed that concupiscence remains even in the justified and sanctified believer. It is the autonomous action of the flesh as against the purity of regenerated spirit but in the regenerated it can be resisted. By ‘flesh’ we do not mean that the body is evil, as by ‘spirit’ we do not mean a part of man is ‘spiritual’ and that the two—‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’—are in conflict. Man was created pure and clean by God. Lust, prurience, adversely affect every part of him, just as obedience in purity affect every part of him for good.

We would say that people see things according to the bent or attitude of their minds, such as we find in Isaiah 5:20–21 and Psalm 18:25–27 where there is perversity of understanding. So that image—the total change in Adam and Eve by which they now saw what was ‘natural’ in their innocency to be ‘indecent’ in their fall—was the outcome of rejecting God, and accepting the deceptive principle the

serpent had set before them. The Bible nowhere teaches that what is sexual is indecent, or that the body is indecent. It teaches that the body has come to be seen as indecent only by reason of sin. What to them had been glorious had now become inglorious and they could not bear the sight. That is why they sought coverage, and this especially to do with their genitalia, that is, the proper organs of generation.

It is clear enough that by listening to the serpent they had removed their loyalty from God and had placed it in that seemingly all-wise serpent. Genesis 2:15 had previously laid on them the responsibility of keeping the garden—that is, guarding it from such a creature as the one known to be the most cunning, shrewd or subtle of all the wild animals—whilst at the same time being worshipful. Their eyes being opened and the so-called godlike wisdom attained, brought them to this pass, that is, their sexuality shocked them. In fact they did not want to come to terms with it, but desired to hide it. They had deep shame because of it. In some way they were now connected with the serpent as the source of wisdom, even this new wisdom. It is good for us to note in passing that this relationship with the serpent was virtual idolatry. Much idolatry had—and still has—a phallic basis to it, and the genitalia are not covered in it but blatantly displayed, especially in symbolic art forms. Even so, because sexuality is intensely personal, art forms such as images, paintings and sculpture cannot produce the same stimulation and response as happens between two living persons. Nudity comes as a scandal in society although nudist communities claim otherwise. They insist nudity is not as sexually stimulative as is scantiness of clothing.

The question could be asked, 'Did the serpent attack the work of human procreation because of his plan for creation, and especially for humankind?' The answer could be, 'Yes, but he attacked the entire plan of God for history'. If we look at the mandate of Genesis 1:26–30 we can see the elements which are attacked:

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.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so.

From Satan's point of view the attack must first be upon the sexuality of 'male and female'—that powerful and beautiful gift of God—and so upon fruitfulness. Then it is to be an attack upon filling up the earth with the fruitfulness of the womb and the universal enlarging of all Edenic blessing. Man must not be allowed to subdue the powers of creation, taking them under his kingship and ruling all things as we also see set out in Psalm 8. Creation must be under Satan's hand as he sees it and Man must not come to being 'a kingdom of priests' and 'reigning upon the earth' (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:9–10). It is in Satan's interest to bring Man to a distaste for genitalia and their Creator, and to have them before him in shame, hiding them from Man's sight, yet using that covering for his own ends in enlarging Man's prurience and tempting him through concupiscence so that Man's total death may ultimately exclude him from God's plan and so defeat God in that plan.

In Luke 4:5–7 Satan made an offer to Jesus, 'And the devil took him up, and

showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours.” This crazed offer shows the mind of Satan in regard to the plan of God. The Devil may be called ‘the god of this world’ but ‘world’ here does not mean ‘created world’ but only that evil system devised by him. Human kingdoms are all under the control of Creator–God.

Of course, in hindsight, Satan came to fear humankind in the light of Genesis 3:15 where it was prophesied that it would be the seed of woman which would ultimately destroy him.

THE WITNESS TO GOD’S INTEGRITY AS CREATOR, AND TO MAN AS HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT

As in past studies we pause from seeing only fallen Man in his misery in order to look at what is ontological and not devised in rebellion against God. As we have discovered, all of humanity is not oriented to the Devil as shown in John 8:44ff. The created order is the true order—de jure. The devised, evil order is de facto but not de jure. God as the God of all grace has chosen and called out His people of faith such as are spoken of in Hebrews chapter 11. The power play of the evil ‘world’ is helpless against the God of all power. So we can here indicate that the gift of sexuality from God is a joyous one. There is nothing evil about human genitalia. Man has been given the wonderful power to bring children into this world, having conceived them in the highest point of love possible to true human parents. Procreation is the union of God and Man in so doing. Pulchritude brings delight to the human heart whereas prurience corrupts and destroys it. What is ontological is designed for human love and peace and joy. Whilst works of the flesh by constant attrition destroy Man’s nobility and regality, dragging him to the depths of death, yet the fruit of the Spirit enlarge him in the image of God.

All of this speaks strongly against Satan the liar and murderer and his ilk, and strongly for those who understand the law as the law of God Himself (subjective genitive) which has been given to Man (objective genitive) to live properly in this world. If we read Scripture well we will see accounts of those who live appropriately before God as being in the image of God. In spite of creation’s being subjected to futility yet it is a wonderful gift from God’s hands. Deep and vast joy is known to those who love God’s law and act within it. As we will see more completely in future studies, the provision of salvation brings genuine peace and serenity to those of faithful hearts and who so live in the integrity of God the Redeemer and Transformer of His children. When marital union is understood as the source of unspeakable joy then we can understand that God as the Husband of His people Israel, and Christ as the Husband of his Bride the church, then we see the *telos* of creation is the marriage of the Bridegroom and Bride, at which epithalamiums—‘nuptial songs or poems in praise of the bride and the bridegroom’—will be sung far beyond those set forth in the Song of Songs.

Having taken a breather from the things of potent death and Man’s existential ‘emptiness’ we now press on to more fully evaluate the evil which holds Man in thrall, so that, farther along the way, we may see the amazing grace which has delivered us from the present things of death.

FURTHER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERVERSION OF HOLINESS AND LOVE IN IDOLATRY

Reminding ourselves that our whole series of studies of the fullness of God and Man began with the passage of Ephesians 3:14–19, and that knowing the love of Christ is what brings us

to have the fullness of God, we embarked on seeing the dreadful nature of our sin, the wrath it evoked in God and the love evoked in us by God's propitiatory sacrifice which deals with that wrath, we realised that the more we see the corruption of human sin, the more we would see the love of God. Now we are looking at the dreadful nature of our sexuality in its action when we have rejected the God who gave us that gift to be to our glory as well as to His.

Over the years in our Ministry Studies we have had cause to face up to the matter of idolatry and have often come upon the place of idolatry in history, viewing it from different vantage points. We here review it from the standpoint of worship and sexuality. True worship of God and reverence for others springs from oneness with God, from inter-relationships with God and Man, to say nothing of relationships which involve other celestial and terrestrial creatures of the universe. These relationships of the human race issued out of the relationships they had with God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has warned us against having direct relationships with others.¹³ All relationships should be via God, if we may put it that way. The primal man had his relationship with God before the woman was *given* to him. Each of the two had a relationship primarily with God and so then with each other. God as three Persons had, and has, inter-relationships with one another as regarding their Persons, and Man—the man and the woman as 'one-flesh'—had relationships with the one God. A two-flesh relationship could not have unity with God, and with each other. There is no unity in duality. Duality came from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This destroyed the unity of God and Man which is essential for true worship since unity shares as God has oneness with His image. Henceforth intrinsic unity of the human race awaited an act of God's grace, the kind of act which would make God and Man to have a (restored) intrinsic unity.

In regard to worship we recognise the destructive happening of Man rejecting God as we find it in the first couple in Eden, and as in Romans 1:19–31 it is shown in the dishonouring of God and the ingratitude for creating them. Worship had been natural to being created in the image of God. When, however, duality takes over through the eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil then the true worship is impossible. Hence the division between the man and the woman brings disunity to them as husband and wife, and so their family is divided, and disunity moves out to all society. The intrinsic unity essential to humanity as a race depends upon Man's created unity with God.

Here we need to see the reality that God is Father, and that we were created as His children, as His family (Luke 3:38; Acts 17:28f.; cf. Jer. 3:14). Then we need to see that the LORD in the OT is the Husband of Israel His Bride (Isa. 54:5; Ezekiel ch. 16; the whole Book of Hosea). Likewise in the NT Jesus is the Husband of the church—his Bride. This takes into consideration the marital and familial union of God with His people. There can be no scandal of a shame-building rejection of that generative act and power which is the gift of God to Man. The love unity of the human race is

¹³ In his books *Living Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes the point that direct relationships with another are unhelpful and even dangerous. The references are too many to quote and both books should be read to understand his point.

destroyed in the act of rejecting God. Now it is the time of the idols!

The Matter of the Idols

In Acts 17:26–28 when Paul is trying to explain the origins of idols to his audience of idolaters at Athens he virtually quotes Jeremiah 2:26–28:

As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth'. For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!'. But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.

When we say 'virtually quotes' we mean that Israel saw the male tree-idol as paternal, and the female rock-idol as their mother. This kept them from seeing God as Father, and Israel as 'the mother of us all', or the Wife of God. Because the illicit always has perverse and powerful attraction then idolatry promises much pleasure, part of that pleasure being Man's opposition to God! The relationships with idols is one of love, but love which is perverted. In all perverted love there is a strange attraction and bond which in the end is fatal. When in Hosea 4:17–19 God says:

Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. A band of drunkards, they give themselves to harlotry; they love shame more than their glory. A wind has wrapped them in its wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their altars,

then He is saying, 'When a person is caught in illicit sexuality then it is impossible to change his mind'. It links with the Song of Solomon's statement:

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned (8:6–7).

Here the Hebrew word for love covers—among other things—that which is passionate and immutable. When the love is invalid it is no less strong than when used for valid love. For years there has been great debate over the Greek words for love, *eros* and *agape*. It has often been said that *eros* is human love and *agape* is divine love. The word *eros* is not used, as such, in the New Testament. *Agape* in its verbal form can be used for loving the world (1 John 2:15). *Eros* is certainly the gift of love God has given to human beings. Where pulchritude is present then love (*eros, agape*) is pure.¹⁴ Where prurience is present *eros* may be called 'fallen love'. All love in its pure form is what we understand as *agape*. So when God says, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone', he means that Ephraim's idolatrous love is strong as death with the idol. This is how powerful idolatry is! No wonder God brought terrifying, extended judgment upon Israel when it clung to its idolatry. At the same time we must understand Ephraim in the light of God's everlasting covenant. Hosea's prophecy shows God's love for Ephraim and Israel:

¹⁴ We have not discussed *why* prurience or pulchritude should be present or absent. At this point we say that they will be present or absent according to whether our relationship is with God in love or not.

How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy (Hosea 11:8–9).

The Principle of Going After Idols

We have already seen in Romans 1:19–25 how Man rejected God and transferred his worship to idols. He wanted a god—or gods—which fitted his desires and which did not make high moral demands of him. The idols must serve him, not he them. This followed his distrust in God’s word and his trust in the serpent’s word. We saw that Man must have an object for his passionate worship, his love. In Deuteronomy chapter 32 we hear Moses sing his beautiful and yet terrible song. Most of it is an invective against Israel’s coming idolatry. One of his main points was that his blessing upon Israel will bring idolatry:

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; you waxed fat, you grew thick, you became sleek; then he forsook God who made him, and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominable practices they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons which were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come in of late, whom your fathers had never dreaded. You were unmindful of the Rock that begot you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth (Deut. 32:15–18).

At this point I wish to use a quote by Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. from P. Fairbairn:

It may possibly appear as if the picture were somewhat overdrawn, when Israel is represented as courting the attention of those foul divinities, and, for that purpose, turning to account her beautiful ornaments and stores of plenty. But a deep truth lies at the bottom of this representation. For what were the false gods in question but the personification of those carnal desires and affections which the good things so amply poured into Israel’s lot had but served to feed? Deified human nature in its manifold varieties of lust and earthliness? So that their zeal in worshipping such gods, and lavishing on them costly tokens of their regard, very much resolves itself into an anxiety to have the countenance of Heaven upon the gratification of their own grovelling and earthly propensities. And hence it was that, when replenished with a fullness of worldly comforts, Israel so naturally preferred the worship of idols to that of Jehovah, and, like a treacherous spouse, breaking loose from the holy restraints of wedlock, yielded themselves to the service of these impure rivals; for thus they could give freer play to the corrupt affections of nature. Their conduct in this was simply an example of the native effect of the world upon the heart, according to the circumstances of the time; and when our Lord, speaking for all times, sets before us the prodigal son, selfishly coveting his portion of goods, and going to spend them in alienation from his father’s house, he but presents us with another exhibition, differently modified, of the same great truth. Let the heart of nature be fed to the full with gifts, and there will never fail to appear, in one form or another, the idolatry of self and the world.¹⁵

A penetrative reading of Romans 1:19–32 will tell us that it is worship which determines the nature of a person. For Israel’s LORD to say to Judah, ‘for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah’, was to say the cities were under the powers of the idols. A vast network of the idols across nations of the world has constituted the power of the Serpent in human history. To truly worship God, and especially through

¹⁵ Ortlund’s book is *Whoredom: God’s Unfaithful Wife in Biblical Theology*, (Apollos, IVP, London, 1996), p. 107. The book by P. Fairbairn is *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (1851) reprinted 1960, Grand Rapids. The book *Whoredom* is a powerful treatment of idolatry, and ought to be read by all who research the subject. It has since been reprinted under the original sub-title, by Eerdmans.

Jesus Christ, means Man is redeemed by the incarnate, crucified, risen and ruling Messiah. To this we must look in our next study as we pursue the emptiness of Man and the fullness of God in those who know the love of Christ.

One further comment relates to why it is that what we call sexuality has such primary power in human living. If we can understand the love of God and the love of Man as it genuinely is in innocence then surely it constitutes total union, total 'one-fleshness', utter oneness. To be cheated of this is to be cheated of the heart of true human living. The shock the primal couple had through their original sin has gone out in waves down through the centuries. Because love originates in God and is the determining factor in all the image of God as Man was created by God, then the rejection of that love of God, for God and from God means barrenness of divine love in a person. At the best there is a duality of two human persons and so the loss of utterness of the love-unity—the 'one-flesh' intimacy—which is God's gift to the human race. This does not satisfy the sensed need, and frustration and so other kinds of anger grow. Pressing for what is the most prized joy and unity, dreadful things happen. Because such love is essential for true human living and the deepest fulfilment-satisfaction humans can know, idolatry cannot supply it but, rather, they are without the desired results. The rebellion of Man is without repentance and so he is given up, or over, to the guilt of his sins (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28) and so relations fail and sin increases. In Romans 1:19-31 we see, if we ponder the passage, that all relationships fail, and that every sin nominated has at its roots the absence of love and the presence of hatred and bitterness. Perverse sexuality compounds itself in further perversity.

When it is seen that 'to be fruitful and to multiply' is the primary purpose of human sexuality, and if this procreation is not realised in obedience then that sexual experience must be seen as selfish and without its grand goal being realised. It is no wonder that it needs the saving work of Christ to redeem Man and bring true love to the sinful human race. Sin at its heart has to be destroyed and true love again flood the human spirit (Rom. 5:5; 1 John 4:9-10).

THE EMPTINESS OF FALLEN MAN—5

HUMAN EXISTENCE UNDER THE TYRANTS

In our series on 'The Fullness of God and Man' we have been using a biblical methodology in trying to reveal how Man becomes filled with God's fullness. We have shown that as Man was created in the image of God he was filled with God's fullness, and indeed that without the fullness he could not be truly Man. Our premise was drawn from Ephesians 3:14–20 where it is shown that when Christ lives in the inner Man by the power of the Holy Spirit, and as we come to know Christ's love which is unknowable, then we are filled unto all the fullness of God. How, then, do we come to know Christ's unknowable love? We have said it is by the gospel, by the work of Christ which he wrought in his incarnation for our redemption. Christ's love is spelled out in all that he did. In order to show how great that love is we have been seeing, by comparison, how dreadful is the state of Man through his fall from the state of innocence at the point when he ate of the forbidden tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have looked at this state under the various ideas of the emptiness which came to him, the consequent filling of him with all manner of evil, the nature of immediate death pervading him, the depravity which became his lot, even the shame he encountered in realising his nakedness. Our *schema* is that if persons can be shown their dreadful state, and can understand what Christ bore in his sufferings for them then they will account that as great love indeed and will respond in repentance and faith.

However, it does not quite happen like that. We have a good proposition to put before people as part of our *schema*, but will they hear it? Because all sin has inbuilt deceit and is linked with the master deceiver, Satan, who himself is directly active towards human beings and seeks to '[blind] the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel' (2 Cor. 4:4) so that recognition of sin and conviction of it totally depends upon the powerful work of the Holy Spirit as Jesus told his disciples on the last night of his life: see John 16:7–11, 'He will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment'. It has been noted, time and again, that fallen humans do not see sin in its reality until they have first been affected by the gospel. When the Spirit brings conviction *then* it is that sin, and especially original sin, is recognised and so, hopefully, the sinner responds with repentance and faith. Even so, it is after God has changed the heart of His people, that they see what sin they had sinned, 'Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds' (Ezek. 36:31). In the midst of grace-rejoicing there is deep sorrow for sin. It is grace which reveals the horror of sin.

What then of our *schema*? Should we proceed to talk about Man's original righteousness and his loss of that righteousness and look for a response of repentance and faith in the listener? I believe so, with the proviso that one is doing so in the power of the Spirit. The truth will unmask the lie; the light will penetrate into darkness and make all things to be seen. That is why we now undertake the task of showing how sin, Satan, evil flesh and the dread of death have come to be ruthless

tyrants in the life of human beings. What, then, are these ruthless enemies and what the exercise of their enmity?

The Tyrant Satan

Hebrews 2:14–15 tells us that men and women all their lifetime through fear of death are subject to Satan. In this context it has been said that men and women fear to die, not because they *have* to die but because they *deserve* to die. In other words Satan has power by reason of human guilt to stir up fear in humans. Most cultures and religions have a figure such as is known in the three great revealed religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Often he is the ‘bogey-person’ accused of bringing evil into the human situation. Even so, most folk do not think about Satan for he has long been a master in camouflage and deceit. He blinds people so that they neither see the glory of God, nor Satan himself. Certainly much we are about to say about him never enters their heads. Evil is a mystery which has to be opened by revelation in order to understand it. Here we sketch some terms and names relating to this fallen angel as he is thought to be:

Here, then, we have a basic characterization with which we can begin our analysis of Satan. Paul presents him, not simply as a principle, symbol, or impersonal force, but as the coordinate member in his series of contrasts to the person of Christ. Satan is a *person*. He cannot be rationalized away as a pre-scientific myth or literary personification. *He moves* (I Pet. 5:8), *works* (Eph. 2:2), *knows* (Rev. 12:12), *speaks* (Matt. 4:3), *plots* (II Cor. 2:11), *desires* (Luke 22:31), *disputes* (Jude 9), *deceives* (II Cor. 11:3), *feels emotion* (Rev. 12:12; I Tim. 3:6; James 2:19), *tempts* (I Thess. 3:5), *makes promises* (Matt. 4:9), *sins* (I John 3:8), and engages in many other activities of a personal nature . . .

The disapprobation felt toward Satan by the inspired writers is manifest from their designation of him as *the evil one* (Matt. 6:3; 13:19, 38; John 17:15; Eph. 6:16; I John 2:13–14; 3:12; 5:18–19), *slanderer* (Matt. 4:1, 11; Luke 4:2, 6; I Tim. 3:6–7; II Tim. 2:26; I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:9; 20:2), *adversary* (I Pet. 5:8), *enemy* (Matt. 13:28–29), *accuser* (Rev. 12:10), *destroyer* (I Cor. 10:10), and *a world-ruler of darkness* (Eph. 6:12); they recoil from him as a *liar and murderer* (John 8:44), *angel of the bottomless pit* (Rev. 9:11), *roaring lion* (I Pet. 5:8), *red dragon* (Rev. 12:3–17; 20:2), and the *old serpent* (Rev. 12:9; 20:2; II Cor. 11:3). He represents nothing constructive, profitable, or good [emphasis mine].¹

To this list we could add many more titles such as ‘the tempter’ (Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5); ‘the deceiver’ (Rev. 12:9); ‘ruler of this world’ (John 12:31; 14:30); ‘prince of the power of the air’ (Eph. 2:2); ‘power of darkness’—and so on. We are not just collecting names to have a descriptive list, for each name, category, or action when studied denotes to us what a destructive creature he is, as he brings blasphemy to be uttered against God in slander; deceit in order to ‘deceive the whole world’ (Rev. 12:9; cf. 20:3); lies to destroy the truth; murder to destroy life; fear to destroy peace; rulership to destroy true authority; darkness to cover light; and so on. When we realise the Devil’s bringing persons into bondage, his stealing the gifts God has given them (John 10:10), then we are shocked beyond measure at the evil this fallen angel can do to persons. When we look at the world, its suppression of the truth, the twisting of the goodness of God, ingratitude for the gifts given in creation and the introduction of idols so that all true worship is denied, then we know the evil power of Satan. In the place of pure worship there is only idolatrous worship which has become infected

¹ Our quote is from ‘The Person, Work, and Present Status of Satan’, an essay by Greg L. Bahnsen in ‘The Journal of Christian Reconstruction’, vol. 1, no. 2, titled ‘Symposium on Satanism’, pp. 11, 13.

with sin, selfishness, distortion and destruction so that we cannot afford to ignore this Evil One.

Let us look at the activities of the Devil according to his names, categories and actions. These reveal his horrific nature, and at the same time make us wise as to who and what he is. Even so, let us keep in mind that the most he is, as created, is a creature, an angel who was given a stated authority and equipped with powers to accomplish the commission given to him. The worst he is, is a fallen angel, arrogant in pride, cruel in action, and corrupted by his own beauty (Ezek. 28:15, 17).² What we need to keep in mind is that he is far from being equal with God. His pride is greater than his ability to accomplish his ambition. In another study we will see how limited he is in his powers to accomplish his horrific aims—as angel—and, since Christ’s victory over him, how defeated he is *now*. At the same time we must be wary of him for the things he can accomplish, especially where he is held in men’s minds to be greatly powerful even though one little word shall fell him, and he will flee in terror from resistant, faithful humans.

Satan and His Forces

Here description of Satan as the head of an evil power force must be mixed with other materials. In Matthew 12:24–28 Jesus speaks quite clearly of Satan’s kingdom and says that where he, Jesus, casts out demons then has the Kingdom of God come upon the kingdom of Satan, that is, as a powerful force. Satan, then, is a king because he has a kingdom. Satan claims this when in Matthew 4:8–9 we find this account, ‘Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me”’.

We find the words *kosmos* and *aeon* used of ‘the world’ in many places especially in 1 Corinthians 1:19–21—so ‘the god of this world’, ‘the ruler of this world’. The two terms do not refer to the created world, as such, when lined with Satan, but to that system over which Satan has founded and gained rulership. When John says ‘Love not the world’ (1 John 2:14–15), he is speaking of the manner of viewing and using the world which Satan and his cohorts use. The *world* in this sense is a powerful imitation of the created world. Satan can originate nothing of an ontological nature. He devises out of the ontological that which is an imitation of the real, the substantial, the foundational. Satan has drawn down a third of the stars of heaven (Rev. 12:4), that is, the angels, and these are part of his force; their powers being conscripted in the fight against God. It is thought by many that these angels are now demons because they are angels practicing evil. With them are ‘the principalities and powers’ as we read of them in Ephesians 3:10, 6:11–12, Romans 8:38–39, and other places. In the Old Testament we can trace some of these, especially in Daniel chapters 10 and 11, who have come to be called ‘folk angels’ for they are linked with nations originally under their care and rulership. These, we take it, are ‘the angels who sinned’ (2 Pet. 2:4; cf. Jude 6). In Matthew 25:41 Jesus speaks of ‘the devil and his angels’ (cf. 2 Cor.

² Some interpret Ezek. 28, which was addressed to the prince of Tyre, as referring to Adam or the principle of the fallen Adam, whilst others refer it to Satan. Certainly these three person are of the same ilk. The passage of Isa. 14:12–21 appears to refer to the king of Babylon, but its reference is also to the Satanic principle of the Devil in his ambition to be equal with—if not above—God. This pride is also that of Man.

12:7, 9; cf. John 1:51³) and implies a special hell is made for them. For the rest, there are humans—‘the children of disobedience’—those who follow ‘the course of this world’ (Eph. 2:1–3). So many then are ‘the children of this world’: so many those who are wicked.

Here we may draw the conclusion that although Satan is only a fallen angel, yet he has marshalled great forces and powers against God. In principle he reminds us of the king in Daniel 8:23–25, ‘a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles’ and ‘His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken.’

Satan, His Abilities and His Actions

Satan’s primary ability—if we call it that—is his person as a liar, his actions of deceit, for his task is monumental. It is to prove to the world that God is the liar and deceitful one whilst he, Satan, speaks the true word. It is to call the ontological order an untrue one, whilst insisting that his—Satan’s—devisings and actions are the truth. This involves changing the law and the times and the seasons as is often said in the Book of Daniel, although such times are in the hands of the Sovereign Creator. This is an extension of the false word he spoke to the primal couple in Eden. So Satan teaches that light is darkness and darkness light, bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter (cf. Isa. 5:20f.)—and so on. He seeks to blind the eyes of men and women ‘to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God’ (2 Cor. 4:4).

With his lying deceit he is a compulsive murderer and also a fearful coward. He feared the seed of woman who, God had told him, would crush him (Gen. 3:15), and he worked so that Cain became one of his ‘children’ (1 John 3:10, 12), and the child of God—Abel—was murdered. All the forms of homicide come from him within the principle of ‘he who commits sin is of the devil’. The world has always had the dread of death hanging over it. ‘Road rage’ and other forms are examples of immediate reactionary anger which can bring instant death. Paul in 1 Timothy 1:8–11 speaks of the way God has laid down the law against homicide and kindred matters. Homicide, of course, is a striking against the image of God (Gen. 9:5–6) and so against God Himself.

Satan has a craze for world domination. He hates the worship of God by the human race and desires all worship to be directed to himself. Once Man changes worship of the Creator for worship of idols then Satan has men and women under his control. They must worship—whatever! To worship idols is to have fellowship with demons (1 Cor. 10:17–22). It is to give a distributive worship to Satan, that is, via the idols. To worship only God and none other, is foundational to true human living. Given in that certain angelic powers—folk powers—have been apportioned to certain nations and peoples for their leadership then it means that Satan who controls them has to do with all nations as he believes is his right (Matt. 4:7–10). Satan, in trying to unseat God from His rightful Kingship, has tried through the kings and leaders of nations to bring all nations under his control.

³ In John 1:51 Jesus addresses Nathaniel, reminding him of Jacob’s dream of the ascension and descension of angels which meant the uprising and down-casting of folk angels and the nations under them. Now, he, Jesus, reveals himself as the one who orders the rise and fall of kings and nations (cf. Dan. 4:36–37). We will speak more of this when we talk of the ruling of the nations by the Son as in Psalms 2 and 110.

The means by which he does this is to exercise the principle by which Nimrod and his successors worked—to build kingdoms against the Kingdom of God. ‘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”’ (Gen. 11:6–7). Satan works by the political principle of hostility.

How does this operate? It does so by means of the idols. Each people-idol is worshipped. From this *cultus* (worship system) national cultures emerge. The god espoused is called to be powerful above other idol-patrons. Satan from the beginning saw to it that a network of idols ruled the nations. To secure the worship apparatus of another nation by invasion meant that the invading god was more powerful than the nation conquered. Out of nations empires were forged and these were anti-God by nature. When God made a special nation of Israel, causing them to be the priest nation among the nations (Deut. 7:6f.; Exod. 19.5f.), then the nations combined against Israel in order to defeat God. Moses told his people that their God was the true God, Ruler of the nations and world, and that their law was the only true one. Deuteronomy chapters 4 to 7 should be closely read and deeply pondered, for true worship and true law are the key to all life, to the whole creation and to the plan of God.

Against all this the hostility of the Devil has been opposed to peace coming among the nations, against reconciliation for all peoples to God and to one another, and a *telos* which will be wholly Edenic. This tells us why and how murder runs through the saga of families, nations and empires, even to the point of genocides and all forms of homicide. It explains that in history nations are not just anti-Semitic, but anti-*God’s worshipping people*. It also reveals to us the love of God for the nations even as they oppose Him, and His passion to win them to reconciliation with Him and to one another. He desired to bring them to everlasting life. We must not miss the aim of the Devil, that is, to build a network of idol-related nations who are consciously against God as in Psalm 2, in the hope of capturing the whole world.

A Conclusion to Satan Being the Tyrant of History

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to the other tyrants who keep fallen sinners in a dreadful bondage. At this point we need to see how every person lives existentially, that is, every person who is under the bondage of Satan. The Devil as liar, thief, deceiver, murderer, slanderer (blasphemer), accuser, destroyer, world-ruler, adversary (enemy), is a ruthless, merciless opponent of all who are faithful to God. That, at one point, he must be locked in the bottomless pit so that the nations might not be deceived tells us he has a dreadful power of evil persuasion and cunning deception. He is the ‘spin doctor’ of all creatures in all time. That he should oppose Christ so bitterly and eventually murder him⁴ tells us what he is. If we did not know of the victory of Christ over him⁵ we would be in mortal terror.

What we now endeavour to do is to see what misery Satan brings to the human race in general and to persons in particular. On the one hand we speak of the bondage

⁴ We have missed the murderous power of Satan if we have not seen—as in the case of Cain and Abel—that Man is incited by him to murder.

⁵ Ahead we will try to sum up the state of fallen Man and the bondages in which he lives and then see how he has been delivered from every tyrant and is a free man. Without this news our whole series would be pointless, and terrifying. In one sense we cannot speak of the evil of Satan until we see that God is more powerful and has already triumphed over this deadly enemy.

we once knew in all its devilish fullness. On the other hand we make mention of how we see the depredations of the serpent, wounded by Calvary, trying to deceive us into thinking it has great power when in fact it is so weak that in fear it would flee from the holy saints of God:

- (a) As the liar, Satan has spoken the word which has separated us from God our Creator, and broken the commission of Genesis 1:26–30, thus filching our true vocation within the plan of God. Vocation which is the joy of the faithful is now dreadful slavery as unregenerate humans are in Satan’s bondage.
- (b) As the liar and murderer, he has brought us directly to death—‘in the day that you eat of it you shall die’. We live, then, in continuing death, dreading bodily death all our lives (Heb. 2:14–15)—empty, yet ‘filled with all manner of wickedness’.
- (c) As the thief (John 10:10), he has stolen our holiness, righteousness, truth, goodness and love, all components of our being in the *imago dei*. He has stolen our joy, peace and love—all components of true human living—and in cynical exchange he has given us lives of existential loneliness, hopelessness, shame of nakedness, with the dreadful qualities of anger, hatred, bitterness, lined with all the nastiness that comes from prurience and concupiscence as we become sceptical of the bliss of pulchritude.
- (d) We are members of Satan’s kingdom-system, with its hierarchy of evil creatures. We are slaves to the tyrant, bound to do his will and never be free. We also have the hidden dread of being part of a lost kingdom, a defeated army of evil, unable to summon up a moral force which alone can ultimately win. How pained the heart, how fearful the mind, how heavy-laden with guilt and fear in the conscience!
- (e) In the whole body of evil conspiring to unseat God from His holiness and His plan for the *telos* of time—the joy of the Marriage of the Bride and the Lamb, the beauty and freedom of the Holy City—we live in the doom of the curse of sin and the fear of death. We are no part of a Divine espousal in which there is neither ‘spot or wrinkle or any such thing’.
- (f) So the memory of the commission to be kings of the earth haunts us, for we are but failed human creatures, living in the shame of defeat and brokenness, unable to be the generators of generations of beloved and holy children. Bitter, bitter is our realising of all this amidst the sepulchral laughter and scorn of a mimic of the good things of God who alone is the true Creator of the *good* good, the truly pleasurable One.

So much more we could say of slaves of evil, but we cannot deny the fact that ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning’ (1 John 3:8), for we have been ‘captured by him to do his will’ (2 Tim. 2:26). This being the case, we live existentially under the co-workers with him—these being sin, the world, the flesh, and death—as these gain their power in the light of God’s wrath, His judgment, His law and the conscience which came into action as guilt and shame on the day Man ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Tyrant, Sin

In the first few papers of our series we have already seen the nature of sin, and the effects wrought by it in human history. Sin is treated as a powerful entity in itself, a personalised being who hates God, hates His law, and increases the fear of death which is thus called ‘the law of sin and death’. It is the antithesis of ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’. In both Testaments it is never spoken of abstractly:

No single Hebrew word is able to exhibit the OT concept of sin fully. The most common word for sin is *hatta'a* (*hatta't*) signifying ‘a missing, a failing, sin’ . . .

Other words often used for sin in the OT are *resa*, ‘wickedness, confusion’; *awon*, ‘iniquity, perversion, guilt’; *pesa*, ‘transgression, rebellion’; *awen*, ‘wrongness, trouble, vanity’; *seger*, ‘lying, deceit’; *ra*, ‘evil’ (usually of injurious judicial or natural effects of sin); *ma'al*, ‘trespass, breach of trust’; *asam*, ‘error, negligence, guilt’; *awel*, ‘injustice’; and the verbs *sasar*, ‘to disobey’, and *abar*, ‘to transgress’ . . .

The main NT words for sin are *hamartia*, ‘a missing of the mark, sin’; *adikia*, ‘unrighteousness’; *anomia*, ‘lawlessness’; *asebeia*, ‘impiety’; *parabasis*, ‘transgression’; *paraptoma*, ‘a fall,’ indicating disruption of the right relationship to God; *poneria*, ‘depravity’; *epithymia*, ‘desire, lust’; *apeitheia*, ‘disobedience’.⁶

Indeed sin is—so to speak—many faceted, constituted of powerful elements. As Jesus said, ‘He who commits sin is the bondsman of sin’, and this is a true saying. The natural—that is, fallen—mind of a person cannot comprehend ‘the forgiveness of sins’ because sin’s deceit (Heb. 3:13) covers the dreadful nature of sin, conceals its deadly nature and trivialises it. To recommend a person to repent and cry out for forgiveness of sins is to impugn that person, to tell him or her of grievous sins committed. It magnifies to the natural man the enormity of it and its guilt. The guilt of sin hardens the heart against receiving liberating repentance from God and the grace of forgiveness. Sin nevertheless brings tight and heavy bondage to the human spirit. In its operations are the elements we read in many biblical lists as being part of the descriptions of human sins. The following lists help us to see clearly the biblical idea of sins which are committed by the human race:

LISTS OF HUMAN SINS IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

List 1: Paul’s list in Romans 1:28–32

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

List 2: Paul’s list in 1 Timothy 1:8–10

Now we know that the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, immoral persons, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

List 3: Jesus’ list in Mark 7:20–23

And he said, ‘What comes out of a man is what defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of

⁶ Quoted from the article ‘Sin’ by Carl G. Kromminga in *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1978, pp. 486f.

man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man.'

List 4: Paul's list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

List 5: Paul shows the sinful life of the Gentiles in Ephesians 4:17–19

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.

List 6: Paul's quotes from the Old Testament in Romans 3:10–18

... as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one.' 'Their throat is an open grave, they use their tongues to deceive.' 'The venom of asps is under their lips.' 'Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.' 'Their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they do not know.' 'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'

List 7: Some comments regarding sin and sinful man in the Old Testament

In Genesis 3:1–6 we have the original disobedience which affected the whole human race. The human race was divided between people of faith and people of disobedience. Cain represents those who believed they worshipped God, yet did not do so, and Abel those who truly worshipped Him. There were those who had no desire to worship Him and worshipped idols. By Genesis 6:5 they are described in the following words, 'The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. Again in Genesis 8:21b, 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth'. Much later Jeremiah commented, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?' (17:9). For the rest, the Old Testament is chock-a-block with comments on sin in its power, its pollution, its presence and its penalty. 'The soul that sins shall die', cries Ezekiel 18:20, and asks Israel the question, 'Why will you die?' (v. 31). As Paul later comments, 'By the law is the knowledge of sin' (Rom. 3:20, AV), and a reading of the Psalms and the prophetic books shows how well sin was known by Israel—a race most sensitive of conscience and so of its guilt.

What then is this formidable foe—this deceiving sin, linked with and springing from Satan himself? How cruel his depredations! How pitiless his working upon Man! Yet even as we criticise sins we realise that they are what a human being—of his own choice—perpetrates. He is guilty of every sin he commits. It may well be that, 'the way of transgressors is hard' (Prov. 13:15, AV), but the transgressor himself has made it hard. Hard it is, and hard beyond computing. Unless warned by the Holy Spirit sin remains as an ever-enlarging tyrant of the most terrible ilk.

The Enemy of the Flesh

The term 'flesh' is used for many things in the Bible, such as physical flesh, Man as distinct from God, the body, human weakness, that is, lacking power to accomplish certain act, the transitory nature of Man of himself. None of these has a perjorative sense. It is when we see that Man is self-seeking, gripped by fleshly passions, asserting himself against God, ambitious, factious, and giving away to evil that we realise the meaning of the word 'flesh' to designate sinful Man who is in the grip of sin, Satan, the world, and so on.

In our previous study we looked at the words 'pulchritude' and 'prurient' in the light of the breaking of the one-flesh unity when the first couple ate of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil and discovered death. ‘Pulchritude’ speaks of a pure and innocent mind regarding beauty and human life, and having nothing of sin and evil since that is the blessing of the pure heart to which all is pure. ‘Prurient’ is that mind towards the same things which thinks evilly of what it regards. This is associated with lust, strong and evil desire. This has been called ‘flesh’ or ‘the flesh’. It is desire out of control. The lusty person lives in the full drive of concupiscence, the evil response to any kind of ‘fleshly’ stimulation. Sometimes the word ‘flesh’ is coupled with ‘the old humanity’ and called ‘the old Adam’. The word ‘man’ (*anthropos*) is used. Other synonyms are ‘self’ or ‘ego’ in the pejorative sense. It is the mind of a self-centred person who has no other person in sight. Soaked with evil the person lusts, desires, is self-saving and can go to the lengths of cruelty, hurt and homicide. Thwarted of promised godhead by the serpent in Eden (Gen. 3:1–6), this ‘old man’ has been filled with all manner of evil. He is the slave of the flesh. The flesh may also take the form of a self-righteous, moralistic person. These have been from Cain until now. Such persons can be said to be ‘natural’, or ‘without the Spirit’, or ‘psychical’. Apart from the Father, Christ and the Spirit that is how we all are:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:5–8).

It seems clear that in Eden the primal couple had the choice of the principle of union with God and obedience to Him, or becoming those who now had the ‘mind of the flesh’, that is, the disobedient, self-seeking mind as we see it in Romans 8:5–7 and other places.

The flesh has tremendous power. In Galatians 5:13–21 we see this evil power in action, firstly in biting and devouring one another, in battling against the Holy Spirit, and in trying to draw him—the regenerated person—away from doing God’s will. The works of the flesh are dreadful:

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Here is a total unmasking of what the flesh is and does. To this we may add 1 John 2:16, ‘For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world’. Second Peter 2:10 speaks of those ‘who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority’. Jude 12–13 speaks of the extent to which fleshly persons go, ‘These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds, carried along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars for whom the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved for ever’.

When we search history we see the awful degrees to which human beings can go, and do go. We see the misery Satan brings to humanity in all forms of homicide, in dreadful wars, in unbelievable genocides, in cruelty and oppression carried out by human beings. Some of us have lived a lifetime in which hundreds of millions have been killed, and still the so-called tolerant mind is not moved by such terrible days but

passes them off as regrettable aberrations of an otherwise admirable humanity.

The tragedy of fleshly humanity is the pain, shame and misery which comes from the actions of 'the mind of the flesh'. The monstrosities of perversions of sexuality, the gradual and creeping corruption of the human spirit once known as the image of God, the descent into the vilest configurations of evil, the spectre of a coming dissolution which will render helpless and hapless the arrogant spirit of the lustful humanity—this is the dreadful and frightening end of fleshly living. No wonder Scripture speaks of 'Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched', 'the hell of fire', and 'the nether gloom of darkness'.

Meanwhile the sinner feels the bitterness of it all in his troubled and restless spirit. He lives from tyranny to tyranny, and finds no rest for his—or her—soul.

Tyrannised by Law and Guilt and Conscience

No one but sadists find it easy to speak of the tyranny under which the human race lives. Crass optimists espouse the theology of 'the original blessing' and ignore the cursing which Man drew down upon himself. For the theologians of easy bliss and untroubled consciences there is little to regret except a certain amissness of human conduct from time to time. Even humanists agree that this is the case, but then they have great hope of better things. For the realist who knows the powerful work of God's love and grace which deals with and overcomes all sins and enemies of Man, the prospect is wonderful and permanent. With this in mind we will now go about understanding the tyranny of law, guilt and conscience and, indeed, the wrath of God which appears also to be a fear-inducing tyrant.

Firstly, we need to recognise that the four seeming tyrants we have named are, in themselves, not evil. How could they be? It is rather that Satan, using these elements, seeks to cause Man to fear God, with the fear that brings anger and then hatred, a state designed to keep Man alienated from God. We have many times observed that the law of God is the law of His own being and so the very outshining of His nature. Made intrinsic to Man in his nature, Man is aware of it, and the first foray into disobedience to it brought into action the human conscience in the form of Man's experience of shame and guilt. Conscience at heart is aware of God. Awareness in innocence is most beautiful for it is awareness of God, and so what one ought to be and do. Awareness in guilt is frightening for conscience brings the sense of obligation in what one ought to be and to do, while at the same time acting judicially in bringing what is called 'pain of conscience', a sort of felt judgment. It dogs Man all his days and nights. That is why we can speak of a 'good conscience', and a 'pure conscience' (in faith, by justification, originally innocent) and an 'evil conscience' or a consciousness of sin, or a seared conscience.

Law and conscience are linked, and guilt and conscience relate to law. In Romans 1:18–31 (see vv. 25, 26 and 28), the wrath of God is shown to be God's act of giving up (*paradidomi*) guilty Man to his own sins, so compounding both sin and guilt. We must understand that guilt is primarily objective, that is, we are guilty at the court of law, but subjective guilt-feelings may be wrong, especially where there is a 'bad' or 'seared' conscience. To sum up, the fallen person has immense conflicts, pain and confusion when in guilt, hates the law, dreads God's judgments and is in deep pain of conscience. If his conscience becomes seared because he has deliberately dulled it, denied it, and ignored it then the pain will have been driven down deeply in his inner being and become most explosive and disastrous.

Death and the Other Tyrants

It is most obvious that Satan, the world-system, sin, when linked with law, conscience and guilt are all bringing pain to the sinner, especially in the light of God's wrath which is upon evil-doing by human beings. The sting of death is sin (1 Cor. 15:56) and the power of sin is the law through which guilt comes. Satan's power (*kratos*: might) of death is able to keep men and women in fear of death and in bondage to Satan from the cradle to the grave—because we 'deserve to die'. Man who was created to be in the image of God, and be co-partner with Him in His plan for creation, has become a creature of desire (Gk: *epithumia*) of lusts to strong lusts (concupiscence). In our next study we will endeavour to deal with this most important matter because we need to see whether lusts can operate in the Christian—'the new creation'—in the way they did in 'the old man', that is, as did 'the flesh', the self-motivated, cruel and egotistical person activated by his self-concern and his lack of concern for others; the God-rejecter who espouses his idols.

CONCLUSION TO THE STATE OF MAN'S EMPTINESS

We are in a position, now, to make some conclusions in regard to the state of fallen, unrepentant humanity. From Ecclesiastes 12:13 we read, 'The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man'. The word 'duty' gives the sense but is not included in the text. 'To fear God and keep His commandments is the whole of man', is what is being said. To do otherwise 'is vanity and a striving after wind' (Eccl. 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17; etc.) The place in which Man was created was the garden of (in) Eden, suggesting, as in the LXX 'the place of delight', that is, 'every tree was good for food and pleasant to the sight'. We saw that Man, in innocency, was in a world of delight. His fellowship with God was total, though not tested and contested until the serpent appeared. Man was the reflection (image) of God and was given commission as God's servant and helper. He was innocent and free in the presence of God. He was, however, warned that in the day that anyone ate of the tree of the knowledge of good (*tob*) and evil (*ra*) he would die. This is what happened. Our four studies regarding the emptiness into which Man came cover the original sin and many of its effects, which we have called 'emptiness'. The word group relates to *mataiotes* (futility, emptiness) in the LXX and the New Testament. Thirty-five times in Ecclesiastes this word is used. The word *kenos* is also used both in the LXX and the NT. We should look again at the idea of emptiness under the heading 'The Nature of Empty Man' in study 3. It indicates a whole dislocation in the created configurations of Man the image of God, and is most frightening.

We then saw that whilst Man seeks to purge himself of the knowledge of God nothing created can remain empty, and so Man was '*filled* with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. *Full* of envy, murder, strife deceit, malignity . . .' and so the terrible descriptions go on. It is not using rhetoric to say that Man lives in a state of death.

In our sixth study we saw the state of Man under the heading, 'Out of Life into Death'. According to God's statement they died in the very day they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Anticipating something beautiful, glorious and powerful far beyond their innocent life, they were filled with dread and fear as they saw, with shock, that they could not abide seeing each other in nakedness. Hitherto

they were 'one flesh' that is, one being, with one mind and heart. Now they were suddenly 'two fleshes', a duality of beings, and nothing could ever be the same again. This was death: they had died to each other. They had lost the unity. Shame and guilt had descended upon them. A dreadful fear of God visited them. They were dead to Him but could not return to their delightful innocency.

All this emptiness we have visited in our research of fallen Man. As we keep saying, it might seem that we have taken no note of the great and wonderful things of Man as the image of God, as enriched by 'original blessing' and have seemed to have turned him into some devilish creature with a holy God always on his heels—and so on. The answer to this observation is that the tragedy of Man cannot be seen unless it is against the foil of his original righteousness, but then Man was never a victim, but always the perpetrator. He has given himself into the hands of the tyrants. The exercise we have taken in our studies until now is with a view to Man being redeemed from his parlous and painful state, into one of wholesome forgiveness of his sins and regeneration to the image of God. These things having happened we will see that a person becomes a participator in the Divine nature, filled unto all the fullness of God. If this will be the case then the ground we have laid will be more than justified. It will result in the revelation of the love of Christ, the love of the Living One, the Triune lover Himself. In our next study we will turn to that love of Christ by which we become filled unto all God's fullness.

Proclaiming God's Fatherhood Among the Nations: Paul and His Mission to Athens

INTRODUCTION

Paul's speech before the philosophers on Mars' Hill in Athens (recorded in Acts 17) has been the subject of no little comment and discussion, especially in relation to its significance as a model for the apologetic task of the Church in its mission. It is often used to illustrate the principle of 'contextualisation' and to give some indication of how the evangelistic task of the people of God can be conducted in a postmodern world. It is argued that the multi-culturalism and religious pluralism of the ancient Graeco-Roman world closely parallel the times in which we live, and that therefore the content and method used by Paul in this encounter may bear fruit in our own day.¹ In particular, the focus often falls on this passage as one which gives us a fine example of how to preach the Lordship of Christ in the face of multitudinous claims of 'lordship' from many other sources—not least the various philosophical and religious systems that form the context of the contemporary mission of the Church.

While there may be some merit in these approaches, it seems to me that a neglected factor in all this is what the passage is saying about the Fatherhood of God and this in relation to the nations of the earth. A quick look at some other New Testament passages will indicate how central this matter is.

We can gather quite readily from passages such as Ephesians 3:1–13 that the thing which brought such inexpressible joy to Paul was that the Gentiles and Jews were now fellow heirs of the promises of God, not least in the promise of their inheritance of the Father through the Son. This did not make the Gentiles to be Jews, but it did mean that the blessings associated with being God's chosen covenant people (as seen, for example, in Rom. 9:4–5) were now open for all the nations. This was indeed in keeping with God's covenantal promise to Abraham, that in his Seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

In Ephesians 1:3–14, Paul indicates that the great plan of creation and redemption has not only begun with God the Father, but also ends with him, with all things being to the praise of the glory of his grace. This great passage is essentially Trinitarian in its structure. In it we see that the purposes of God the Father have been secured through the redemptive work of the Son, and revealed to men and women through the Holy Spirit. The redemptive purpose of God is thus to bring the knowledge of his Fatherhood to the nations.

Whereas in the Old Testament, Israel was at liberty to understand itself to be the adopted son of God (e.g. Exod. 4:22–23; cf. Deut. 14:1; Hosea 11:1; Rom. 9:4), the nations at large did not stand in this special relationship to Yahweh. Israel alone was his 'treasured possession' among the nations of the earth (e.g. Deut. 7:6–8; 14:2). Now the plan and purpose of God has been revealed: this status is for all, through belief in the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whom men and women are united to the Father in Christ, and to one another by virtue of this spiritual union (so Rom. 12:5). The dignity, glory, liberty, power and

¹ See, for example, the following comment: 'In many ways, western culture in general and North American culture in particular resembles that of Athens in Paul's day. Like the Athenians, to whom belonged an illustrious cultural past, ours is what Alexander Solzhenitsyn has called a culture of novelty. We are obsessed with that which is novel; truth and its consequences are of little value.' Charles, J. D. 'Engaging the (Neo)Pagan Mind: Paul's Encounter with Athenian Culture as a Model for Cultural Apologetics (Acts 17:16–34)' in *Trinity Journal* (1995, Spring), vol. 16 (1), p. 61.

responsibility of sonship are now open to all nations of the world. Redemption is not an end in itself, but leads to the goal of adoption, so that in the Spirit men and women may cry out 'Abba, Father!' (see the series of purpose clauses in Gal. 4:4ff., for example). Paul's apostolic ministry, therefore, had reconciliation with the Father as its goal, and for this reason he preached Christ as the crucified redeemer, since there could be no communion with the holy Father without the issue of sin being dealt with and without his just wrath being propitiated fully.

With these introductory comments in mind, we now turn to the text of Acts 17:16–34, which will occupy the bulk of the rest of this paper, since, if we have correctly identified the burden of Paul's apostolic message, it would be strange if we did not find it emerging in this proclamation, in the very midst of the nations and their alternative worship systems.

THE CONTEXT OF PAUL'S SPEECH

One of the startling observations about the spread of the gospel in the book of the Acts is how little its progress lay in the hands of men, and how much they were driven along by the winds of the Spirit. Sometimes the movements of the gospel were brought about through dreams, visions or prophetic words (e.g. Acts 13:1–3; 16:9–10), but often the events seem to be the result of circumstances pressing in upon the preachers. Whatever the means, God superintends all things, so that the whole of Acts is indisputably the action of the risen and ascended Lord spreading his own word in the power of the Spirit. In the case of Paul's proclamation in Athens, the long string of events leading to his appearance before the philosophers of the city began way back in Thessalonica. Trouble stirred up by a Jewish faction there (Acts 17:5ff.) followed Paul to Berea (Acts 17:13ff.), so he was sent away to Athens for safe keeping (Acts 17:14–16).

While there, Paul was deeply troubled in his spirit by the ubiquitous idol worship of the city (Acts 17:16). Indeed the city was 'full' of idols. The concept is not simply one of quantity (there were many of them), but quality (they ruled the place). The *KJV* preserves the thought well: 'he saw the city wholly given to idolatry' (cf. *NJB* 'a city given over to idolatry'). There is probably nothing more disturbing to the regenerated human spirit than overt idolatry, since it is the antithesis of all that the Spirit has brought to birth in the hearts of God's people. In shedding the love of God abroad in the hearts of Christ's people (as in Rom. 5:5), the Spirit causes us to love God, and to long to keep his commandments. Chief amongst these are the commandments regarding false worship (see Exod. 20:1–6; Deut. 5:6–10). We have been created to worship God, and we are most fully human when we are giving glory to the one who has made us in his image. Conversely we see human depravity in its depths when we see human beings prostrated before idols, under whose power they live in slavery. The idols always bring with them moral degeneracy and spiritual oppression (cf. Rom. 1:18–32), and it is clear that through them the evil one himself exercises dominion over the worshippers (see 1 Cor. 10:17–22 for example).

There is nothing 'accidental' about this. Just as the people of God are shaped in and by true worship to be conformed to his image, so the children of the devil are shaped in and by him to be conformed to his image.² Whereas the Father seeks worshippers who worship in Spirit and in Truth, the evil father seeks worshippers over whom he operates as a false god and father, over whom he rules by a spirit of deceit. He begets children in his own likeness through what Geoffrey Bingham has rightly called a 'network' of shrines and sanctuaries where the worshippers seek power. There they learn his so-called wisdom and participate in fellowship with him, just as the true worshippers learn their wisdom in the sanctuary of God and there commune with the Father into whom they have been bought into relationship through union with Christ, the High Priest over the household of God. There they are empowered by his presence, especially in the love and fellowship of his people.

In response to the provocation of the idolatrous character of the city, Paul begins his proclamation in Athens, starting in the synagogue and with the 'God fearers' (Acts 17:17). We should not miss the grammatical (and theological) connection between verses 16 and 17. The 'so' (*oun* = 'therefore') is important. Paul saw the rank idolatry of the place and was provoked to proclaim the gospel, which alone can bring people into the true worship of God. While we may sometimes be diverted by the moral and spiritual degeneracy of the idols, there is little point in attacking the symptoms of the problem. The matter must be addressed at its nerve centre, and so Paul preaches the gospel directly, and he starts where he always did, with the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles.

Paul's daily proclamation of Christ aroused the interest of some of the city's leading philosophers (Acts 17:18), who assumed that Paul was preaching two new gods to add to the pantheon: Jesus and Anastasis (resurrection). As Ben Witherington has indicated, their approach to Paul and his message may be more than mere intellectual interest. Socrates, for example, was accused of proclaiming 'strange deities', and put on trial for his teaching. It may well be that Paul's appearance before the Areopagus³ (Acts 17:19) is much more in the character of a trial than an intellectual debate!⁴ While it is clear from Luke's comment in verse 21 that Athens was full of the desire for new information or concepts over which to debate, we should not presume that this implies a morally neutral enquiry. From the perspective of the New Testament, the idea of moral neutrality that we sometimes attach to our understanding of the 'scientific method of enquiry' is a myth (see, for example, comments such as those in 1 Cor. 2:14-16; 2 Cor. 4:1-5; etc.). Paul is here embarking on a confrontation with the wisdom of this age, which is inherently opposed to the wisdom of the gospel and which must be judged by it. We must not lose sight of the fact, however, that Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, and that this

² It could be argued that 1 John is essentially a pastoral application of this very point. See, for example, 1 John 3:1-10.

³ 'The term Areopagus (v. 19) can refer to a body of people and to a physical location. As a group of people, it was the most important administrative body within Athens. As a physical location, it referred to the Hill of Mars. Though the exact location of Paul's Areopagus sermon is not specified, it may have been given on Mars Hill itself.' McGrath, A. 'Apologetics to the Greeks' in *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1998, 1998, July), vol. 155, p. 259. In addition to the various commentaries, further background to the speech can be found in Charles, J. D. 'Engaging the (Neo) Pagan Mind: Paul's Encounter with Athenian Culture as a Model for Cultural Apologetics (Acts 17:16-34)' in *Trinity Journal* (1995, Spring), vol. 16 (1), pp. 47-61.

⁴ Mare comments that 'in Roman times the Areopagus Council had supervision over religious education and visiting lecturers', so they would be very keen to 'check Paul out' as a visiting teacher to the city. Mare, W. H. 'Pauline Appeals to Historical Evidence' in *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1968, Summer), vol. 11 (3), p. 124.

proclamation led him to stand before the council. He returns to this point at the end of the speech, and this must help us interpret the contents of it.

THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S SPEECH

Having seen something of the context of the occasion we can now turn our attention more fully to what Paul actually said.

Paul begins by commenting on the 'religious' nature of the Athenians (Acts 17:22), which may be patient of a double interpretation (as the word can mean 'religious' or 'superstitious', depending on the context): not only are they inveterate worshippers, they are devoted to the worship superstitiously. So keen are they on the inclusive nature of their worship, they incorporate an altar to 'an unknown god'. This may mean two things, and these may not be mutually exclusive. The general understanding of the pantheon (lit. 'all gods') was of a group of competing and rather petulant deities, motivated by rage, jealousy, ambition and lustful behaviour, who must be appeased in order to secure and keep their favour towards the person, city or empire in question. Deities of other regions were worshipped, so that they could bring their blessing to the city as well. Historically, the gods of captive races had been imported into the pantheon, as was still the case with the worship practice of Rome, over whose pantheon the deified Caesar ruled, through whose worship imperial unity was maintained. Across the Graeco-Roman world generally, superstition, divination, augury and other such practices formed the matrix of day-to-day life as well as the context of decision-making in high places. Here in Athens it may be that the motivation to worship an unknown god was to 'cover all the bases' lest the unknown god bring a curse upon the place. 'Better safe than sorry' might be the motto!

However, there is another option. The 'unknown god' might in fact be a reference to the God of the Jews. For the pagan world, Jewish worship was deeply mysterious. The Jews worshipped a God who had no image, and who forbade other images being made. Because he could not be seen, he was, effectively, 'unknown'. Though the Jews worshipped him, the rest of the nations did not know him and could not see him, so there may have been an altar raised to this mysterious, invisible God of this ancient and (from their point of view) curious and troublesome people. Of course, this may not rule out our comments above: if he is there, and if he is as great as the Jews make him out to be, perhaps he will be happy with an altar set up out of good intentions.

Paul does seem to indicate that there is a connection between the 'unknown god' and the God of his people, Israel. In Acts 17:23b, Paul indicates that the one they worshipped in ignorance is the one whom he is about to proclaim to them. To do so seems to indicate that the one they regarded as 'unknown' was in fact very well known by Paul, and that he was commissioned to proclaim him among the nations that he has created.⁵

What follows is a potted Old Testament theology. Acts 17:24–27 cover the essential characteristics of God, as described in the pages of the Old Testament. Paul presents God as the creator and sustainer of all things, who is entirely self sufficient, and who rules over heaven and earth. He alone is the one who gives life to all things, and by him all the nations of the earth have been created. He has formed the nations from 'one' (man), and rules over their times and boundaries, with a view to the fact

⁵ There is an interesting grammatical shift at this point. The one they worship in ignorance is a 'what' and 'this' in v. 23, but personal ('the God who . . .') in v. 24.

that all men everywhere should seek him, though he is in reality nearby to all. The picture of humanity here, groping around in the dark yet not finding God, is consistent with much other Pauline teaching, such as Romans 1:18–32, where men and women are described as being in a 'darkened' state, despite all that the world calls 'wisdom'. They are seen as suppressing the Truth, having blinded eyes (e.g. 2 Cor. 4:1–4), and hearts that are far from God (e.g. Eph. 2:1ff.).⁶ Thus, they exist in a state of culpable ignorance, where the knowledge of God is both real and terrifying, yet denied.

At this point Paul alludes to, or quotes from, a couple a Greek poets (Epimenides of Crete in Acts 17:28a, and Aratus of Cilicia in 17:28b). Greeks in general and the Athenians in particular saw themselves as inherently superior to other peoples due to their being the offspring of the gods by special action.⁷ They were, in their view, the offspring of Zeus, and therefore justified their own assessment of their elite status. Paul here takes this quotation and effectively reorganises their entire universe. He tells them that they are not the offspring of Zeus but of Yahweh, the 'unknown god' of the Jews. Moreover, they can claim no elite status, since all men everywhere in every nation under heaven are his offspring.⁸ No one nation has a right to claim superiority on the basis of their origins, for all the nations have been formed from one man, and this by the action of God who rules over all the nations with absolute sovereignty. He, not any other so-called god, has determined the destiny of the nations, and they have all been ordered according to his purpose. No one person or nation should treat another with harshness, nor seek to rule on the basis of their 'inferior' status, for all have one origin, and the law of their creator applies universally to all.

In the light of this re-orientation, Paul moves on to the central point of his message, which connects with the context of his proclamation in the synagogue (Acts 17:16). Because of who God is, and because of who we are as his offspring, idolatry is entirely ruled out (Acts 17:29). Walter Brueggemann, commenting on the opening chapters of Genesis, has said:

The grammar of these chapters presumes that there is a *Subject* (creator), a *transitive verb* (create) and an *object* (creature/creation). The single sentence '*Creator creates creation*', is decisive for everything. It is not subject to inversion. The sentence asserts that God does something and continues to care about what he does . . . the verb that links them is irreversible . . . the verb 'create' is in fact without analogy. It refers to the special action by God and to the special relation which binds these two parties together.⁹

This sentence—Creator creates creation—rules certain things in, and other things out. It rules in the fact that human beings owe their worshipful obedience to God alone, who is their maker. It means that he is both their sovereign King and Father, and on both counts (though they are really one) human beings have been created to live unto him, and to magnify his glory. When seen in the context of Genesis 1:26ff., where men and women are described as

⁶ See the following comments from Richard Gaffin:

All told, what Paul ascribes to unbelievers is knowledgeable ignorance, uncomprehending understanding. The unbeliever both knows and does not know, and there are no categories for neatly distinguishing the one from the other. This dialectical dilemma of the unbeliever is the genius of Paul's teaching. However capable of being better formulated to anticipate the objection, this analysis is not to be dismissed as self-contradictory nonsense. Unbelievers do know they know God and, within the parameters of unbelief, there are *no* categories or distinctions in terms of which that is *not* true; they know completely, that is, they know from the heart. But this knowledge in its actual possession is always confused, inevitably unstable. To use Paul's language, it is in every respect futile; it can serve no useful, constructive epistemological purpose either in understanding God or, in that light (or better, that darkness), ourselves and the rest of the creation.

Gaffin, R. B. in 'Some Epistemological Reflections on 1 Cor. 2:6–16', *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 57 (1), (1995), p. 120.

⁷ Spencer, S. R. (1988, Spring). 'Is Natural Theology Biblical?' in *Grace Theological Journal*, vol. 9 (1), p. 65.

⁸ The vocabulary here is important. Paul is able to speak about human beings generally as God's 'offspring' (*genos*) (Acts 17:29), but this term usually refers to a 'non immediate descendant', or it can be used to speak in a manner corresponding to our term for a species or race. In contrast, the more specific and mature word for 'son' (*huios*) is only ever used of believers (e.g. Rom. 8:14).

⁹ Brueggemann, W. (1982). *Genesis* (pp. 16f.). Interpretation Commentary. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

having been made in his image, it means that this sentence gives the full dignity to humanity that God accords them. Though all things have been created by God, no other creatures have been formed in his image and likeness. It is in this created state that humanity is accorded the magnificent honour of being 'a little less than God', and appointed to rule over the works of his own hands (as in Ps. 8).

At one and the same time, however, the sentence rules out many things. It means that God and the creation are not the same (contra the pantheism of the Stoics), and that matter is not eternal (contra the reason of the Epicureans). The creation is just that, the creation of God. He remains eternally God, and while he displays his covenantal faithfulness to his creation, he is separate from it and sovereign over it. By the same token, any thought of human divinity is ruled out. The Athenians, no less than any other group of people, are the creation of God, and therefore cannot claim any spark of divinity themselves. In the original context, the creation accounts provided a powerful polemic against the divine kingships in operation in places such as Babylon and Egypt. In the days of the New Testament, Emperor worship was prevalent. Throughout the history of the world, in various places and in various ways, men and women have sought to express their sinful pride by claiming divinity for themselves (not least in the New Age movement, a lukewarm re-heating of ancient gnostic beliefs and practices). Of particular importance here, is the fact that God's being as Creator-Father (and the nature of the creation itself) rules out entirely any idolatry (Acts 17:29). The actions of the very religious Athenians are, in fact, a sustained and multiplied transgression of the first two commandments (Exod. 20:3-6; Deut. 5:7-10). As Calvin has pointed out, 'there is no one among us who does not invent idols in infinite number',¹⁰ a fact which should not surprise us since we have been created for worship. There is no vacuum of 'non-worship' in the human spirit, but only a question of the object or person of our worship. We worship, and at the same time desire to be worshipped, so that we are caught into a web of pride, idolatry and deceit. However, more tellingly than this, the first commandment virtually equates idolatry with hatred of God. The situation is not 'unfortunate' (as though humanity has fallen on hard times, and has no choice in the matter), but one in which our active hatred of God is expressed. God prohibits idolatry, and indicates that he will visit his wrath upon men and women 'to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me'. To engage in idolatry is to show contempt for our Creator-Father, and the way in which we embrace the idols with such alacrity indicates the very deep-seated nature of our animosity towards God.

In contrast to the Epicurean view of the gods being far removed from the material world of men, essentially disinterested in them and their affairs, Paul indicates that Creator-Father is intensely concerned with the destiny of the nations and the nature of their worship. He has not left the disobedient worship of the nations go unnoticed,

¹⁰ Calvin, J. (1980). *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments* (ed. John W. Farley, p. 66). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

though he has not brought it to the full pitch of the judgment it deserves (Acts 17:30a). Though he has acted in history to bring judgment on idolatry (e.g. in the exile of his people Israel, or in other actions of judgment brought against the gods of the nations), he has never brought the judgment to the absolute pitch. He has 'overlooked' these times of culpable ignorance, with a view to the atoning judgment against all false worship that was to be borne on the Cross by his Son. This is why Paul was proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection, for in so doing he was explaining that the Creator–Father of all men has now provided the means in history by which his just judgment has been met. In the Cross of his Son—through his death and resurrection—the ungodliness and unrighteousness of sinful men (who suppress the truth by exchanging it for the lie of idolatry) has been judged.

We cannot tell what this action meant for the Father, Son and Spirit in the event of the Cross. What did it mean for the Son, the divine temple of the Spirit *par excellence*, to be made sin? To have the idolatry of the rebellious nations heaped upon him there, to feel the fellowship with *Abba* broken? To have the glory of the Spirit depart as he bore the judgment of sin and experienced the unmediated and unmitigated wrath of the holy Father on the wickedness and idolatry he carried in his body on that day? Who can understand what these things meant for the Father, who brought his just wrath to bear on his beloved Son? Or the Spirit who empowered the Son to be there and bear it all? The real experience of the Cross is beyond any human estimation, and the terror of its holy judgment beyond comprehension, but *that* it happened was inescapable and *that* the judgment had run its course was evident. Jesus, crucified as sin for sinners, was raised up, vindicated as the righteous Son of God, bringing forth justice to the ends of the earth (so Acts 17:31c).

In view of this gracious action, the Father has now sent his messengers into the world with the good news of Jesus and the resurrection, and with the demand that all men everywhere should now repent of their idolatry (Acts 17:30b). There is an inescapable urgency in this message, since the time of grace (in which proclamation of the gospel is being made) will come to an end. Just as in the days of Noah—where there came a time when the doors of the Ark were shut tight and all outside were flooded in judgment—so in the Day of the Son of Man there will be no further opportunity for repentance. God has appointed his Son as the Judge of the world. He, as the risen and glorified man Jesus Christ, will return and he will bring righteous judgment to the nations of the earth. Leaving aside what this implies about the divinity of Jesus Christ (as God alone is the one who judges the world in the Old Testament), there is ample testimony to the role of Jesus as Judge elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 25:31; John 5:22–23; Rom. 2:5; cf. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1; etc.). The last great day is the day of the wrath of God *and* the Lamb (Rev. 6:16; 14:10). The overall principle of John 5:23b will no doubt be in operation: 'Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him'. To despise the work of the Son as the sin-bearer is to despise the Father who sends him into the world as the propitiatory Lamb.

The fact of the coming judgment also alerts us to the nature of the holy Father who is ruling over the nations. There is no contradiction between his Fatherhood and his judgment of the nations. Though he give judgment to the Son on the last day, it is still he who judges (so John 8:16). He judges the secrets of men's hearts by Christ (Rom. 2:16) and hard hearts towards the gospel store up his wrath to be revealed at the last day (Rom. 2:5). He is the one who judges the whole world on the last day (Rom. 3:5), and before whose judgment bench all men and women will be assembled to give account (Rom. 14:10–12). Such teaching is entirely in keeping with the Old

Testament understanding of God the Judge (e.g. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 50:6; etc.), and the great, cataclysmic judgment at the end of history is both inescapable and universal (Rev. 20:11–15). The God of whom Paul speaks, then, is no genial father-like figure. Where there is no repentance and faith in his Son, the Father brings his righteous judgment on those who hate him. He is indeed the holy Father, whose being is perfect light. As P. T. Forsyth has reminded us:

'God is Love' is not the whole gospel. Love is not evangelical till it has dealt with holy law . . . There is a kind of consecration which would live close to the Father, but it does not always take seriously enough the holiness which *makes* the fatherhood of the cross—awful, inexhaustible, and eternal, as full of judgment as of salvation . . . We cannot put too much into that word Father . . . But we may easily put into it too little.¹¹

The talk of Jesus and the resurrection (presumably, not simply the resurrection of Jesus, but the resurrection of all men and women at the last judgment) brought a mixed response, as it always will (Acts 17:32). However, there were some who heard and obeyed the message that Paul brought, 'among whom were Dionysius the Areopagite, and woman named Damaris, and some others with them' (Acts 17:34). These were they who at that point were freed from their idolatry and all its consequences, and came to know the true Father, worshipping him in Spirit and in Truth.

SOME FURTHER REFLECTION

In covering the material from Acts 17 in the way we have, we have barely begun to open up the burden of Paul's preaching or its ramifications. What follows may best be described as 'work in progress' for our further reflection.

Firstly, though all men and women may be spoken of as God's 'offspring', since the Fall they are not his children by natural birth alone. In Adam all men and women are dead to God, and naturally children of the devil. To those who receive the Son, power is given to become sons of God (John 1:12f.). They become the 'children' (*tekna*) of God—a word parallel with the term 'sons' (*huios*) of God¹²—by the will and choice of the Father himself (so John 12:13), and in so doing are set free from the power of the idols. The route to sonship lies in believing union with the Son. Repentance is both mandated and necessary. The nature of this repentance is fundamentally as Paul describes it in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where he says of the church there, 'you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God'. Given the nature of idolatry it is probably no understatement to say that the fundamental issue in repentance is that of worship.

Secondly, the nature of our creation in God's image means that we have been

¹¹ Forsyth, P. T. *God the Holy Father*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1987, p. 5.

¹² John habitually uses the words child/children (*teknon*) as the equivalent of son/sons (*huios*) in terms of status and responsibility (e.g. 1 John 2 & 3), though rarely he uses both terms together (e.g. Rev. 12:5). In John *huios* is used almost exclusively of *the* Son, through whom men and women come to know the Father. John thus distinguishes between the ontological and eternal Son, and those who come to son status by belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul distinguishes between *the* Son and the *sons* not by using the word 'child' (though he is not averse to it: see, for example, Rom. 8:16–21), but by the more formal use of the language of adoption. In either case, however, the emphasis is on the gracious action of God in bringing men and women into a new status.

formed to be the sons of God (as in Gen. 5:1–5; cf. Acts 3:38). Paul's criticism of the idolatry of the city is based on his exposition of God's nature as the Creator–Father of all humanity. In effect, he argues that idolatry is wrong because it is God the Father who gives life to all things, and it is he whose offspring we are. He alone, therefore, is the fitting object of our worship, that is, our obedient and joyful service. In the history of the world, only one nation had the adopted status of 'son'. Israel, by divine choice, was the precious possession of God, his 'son' in the midst of the other nations of the earth. Paul's message indicates that through this chosen son–nation, *the Son* has come, the Seed spoken of in Genesis 3:15, to crush the head of the serpent. While the nations persisted in their ignorance of God, Israel was meant to live in settled assurance of their relationship to Yahweh as the Creator–Father of their nation in particular (e.g. Ps. 100:3; cf. Isa. 43:1ff.).

In the light of this background, we can see that Paul's discourse is entirely congruent with the Old Testament's view of idolatry. While numerous passages could be alluded to, the point is particularly clear in the message of Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 2:27, for example, the shame of Israel is revealed in the actions of the kings, priests, princes and prophets, 'who say to a tree, "You are my father," and to a stone, "You gave me birth." For they have turned their back to me and not their face.' They are thus 'faithless sons' (Jer. 3:14) who have not obeyed the voice of God. Passages such as Hosea 11:1ff. emphasise the same point: God has created Israel to be his obedient son–nation for their blessing. This status they had rejected in favour of the idols. God's purpose, however, is to lead them through repentance to know him as Father again (cf. Hosea 1:10). He says to them, 'You shall call me Father, and not turn away from following me' (Jer. 3:19). Sonship, therefore, is a matter of relationship and obedience (and this secured through redemption) not simply of natural birth or creation. The wickedness of idolatry is not that it is simply prohibited, but that it is a rejection of the one who is our Father in favour of some other, surrogate, fatherhood. In the light of the whole counsel of the Scriptures, we see that this surrogate fatherhood is not benign, but is indeed supported and empowered by the one known as Satan.

Thirdly, these thoughts open up for us something of the really dire nature of idolatry. In the Old Testament, the idea of fatherhood is related to concepts such as identity, inheritance, destiny, fruitfulness, blessing and glory (and probably many others!). Human beings were created to know all these things in relation to God himself, as their Father. In their rebellion they exchanged the Truth for a lie, but such a lie must, by the very nature of the case, involve an exchange of fatherhood. Men and women must seek an alternative fatherhood, and this is neatly provided for them in the system of worship given by Satan through what Geoffrey Bingham has referred to as the 'network' of sanctuaries of false worship. In these, men and women seek to find their identity, inheritance, destiny, fruitfulness, blessing and glory—without submission to the Father, and without realising that they are in fact snared by a false and evil 'father' (e.g. John 8:38–44; cf. Matt. 13:38; 1 John 3:8–10; etc.). In being thus gripped by evil they are at once ignorant and culpable. The light of the gospel thus shines into darkened hearts and minds, either to bring relief to the misery of sin by repentance, or to bring confirmation of the culpability of their evil by its rejection.

Fourthly, the false fatherhood provided by Satan through his system of idols is used by him, in league with the Flesh and Sin, to provoke human pride and to confirm the nations in their hatred of one another. The Athenians reckoned themselves to be something by virtue of their special origins, being the offspring of Zeus. Pharaohs, emperors, kings and nations have excused brutality, domination, warfare, plunder,

slavery and all manner of evil on the basis of their direct connection with (or embodiment of) divine fatherhood. The history of warfare, as well as the terrible tragedy of personal human sin and its associated suffering, may all be seen as a manifestation of various attempts to assert one's so-called divine rights over against others. By contrast, the sonship given to us by grace through the gospel is that which unites us to the Father in the Son, with the indwelling power of the Spirit. The end point of this wonderful gift is glorification, in which all of those in Christ will be conformed finally and fully to his image (Rom. 8:29) so that we together with him as our head and elder brother will be able to fully reflect the glory of the Father in all eternity. In this light, then, we can understand something of Paul's incredible joy that he is able to proclaim the great mystery of God's plan and purpose and the meaning of this for the unity of the 'one new man' (see Eph. 2:10 – 3:18). Here (and here alone) is the enmity of the nations put to rest, through the creation of a new, worshipping humanity which worships the Father in Spirit and in Truth.

Fifthly, the proclamation of Jesus and the resurrection are put into proper context when we see them in relation to the reconciliation that they bring with the Father, and the gift of adoption that they afford. We commented earlier that Fatherhood is linked with many fundamental biblical concepts such as inheritance, identity, glory, blessing and so on. None of these can be enjoyed without the mediating work of the Son. We consider briefly the matter of 'blessing' as one example. In the Genesis narratives, patriarchal blessing was passed on to the chosen son, guaranteeing the continuance of the line of promise. At the head of this chain of blessing is God, the Father–Creator. As Sailhamer comments:

... the author [of Genesis] shows at each crucial turning point in the narrative, that God himself renewed his blessing to the next generation of his sons (1:28; 5:2; 9:1; 12:3; 24:11). Seen as a whole, the picture that emerges is of a loving father ensuring the wellbeing of his children through the provision of an inherited blessing. In this way the author has laid a theological foundation for the rest of Scripture. God's original plan of blessing for all humanity, though thwarted by human folly, will nevertheless be restored through the seed of the woman (3:15), the seed of Abraham (12:3) and the 'Lion of the tribe of Judah' (49:8–12; cf. Rev. 5:5–13). It is on this same foundation that the apostle Paul built his view of Jesus as the one through whom God has 'blessed us' (Eph. 1:3) and 'adopted us as his sons' (v. 5) so that 'we have obtained an inheritance' (v. 11, *KJV*) from the one we may call '*Abba*, Father' (Rom. 8:15).¹³

Given this Old Testament background, it is highly significant that in the New Testament all blessing comes through *the* Son, the True Seed. He is the elect Son from all eternity, in whom all the elect sons of God are blessed, and through whom the blessing of God the Father reaches the nations. Christ, too, as the Son in whom the sons are blessed, guarantees the fruitfulness of those blessed in him, by the gift of his Spirit. These blessed ones, as adopted sons of God, share in his rule and reign (as well as his sufferings) for the glory of God the Father, from whom all blessing flows. It is only by the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection, in the context of the Father's purpose of blessing for the nations, that the power of the idols can be broken, and that men and women can be set free into the joyous liberty of being counted sons of God. This is the message that we have for the nations of the earth.

¹³ Sailhamer, J. H. *Genesis*, Expositor's Bible Commentary. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, p. 71.

COMING INTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD—1

A GENERAL STATEMENT ON THE MATTER OF LOVE

In 1 John 4:7–8 John says, 'Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.' In verse 7 he states that 'love is of God', meaning it can not be from elsewhere. One should only go to God in the matter of love. Love has no other source than Himself. In verses 8 and 16 he says clearly, 'God is love'. There may be many forms of love, but none is true and pure love which is not of Him. Because He is love we need to know His love in order to know Him. John says that to be born of God is to know God. To know God is to know love.

Because of the Fall those born of Adam do not know or show pure love, and love that is not pure love is not love as Man is commanded to exercise it. Of course there is seemingly much love in the world but in essence it is not truly love. As we have been arguing, to know Christ's love is to be filled with all the fullness of God. We might take a verse like Romans 5:5, 'and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us'. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot receive, know and experience that love.

How, then, do we come to know God's love? John says, 'We love, because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19, *RSV*). We need to discover God's first loving us, and we are still in the process of doing this. We are seeing what is the state of Man apart from God, and then how God, through Christ, has rescued us from that state and transformed us. This is how we come to God's love and then, out of God's love, begin the life of love for others. Love is not a thing or a power or influence. It is known and exercised in relationships between God and Man and between persons in the body of humanity. To put it simply, the new community—the *ecclesia*—is filled with faith because of 'the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20), and 'By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us' (1 John 3:16)—cf. John 13:1, 'having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the very end'.

GETTING TO KNOW CHRIST'S LOVE

At this juncture we come back to the passage on which we have built our series, that is, Ephesians 3:14–19:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Our proposition in this passage is that Paul prays (Eph. 3:1, 14ff.) that his readers, in accordance with the riches of God's glory, may be strengthened with all might

through the Holy Spirit in the (their) inner man. That strengthening is linked with the consequent dwelling of Christ in their hearts by faith. They gain strength by the Holy Spirit to have Christ dwell in their hearts—by *faith*. The outcome of Christ’s dwelling in them is that from his indwelling them in his love they come to be grounded and rooted in love, and this happens along with all the saints and not just as a single person, so that they come to know Christ’s love in all its dimensions even though Christ’s love can be said to be beyond human knowledge. The outcome of this knowledge of Christ’s love is that they will be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Let us look at this closely and make some comments for ourselves and our understanding of Christ’s love. Paul desires that they ‘be filled *unto* all the fullness of God’ rather than *with* all the fullness of God at a certain point.¹ This rather indicates that the action is present yet at the same time is eschatological; that Paul is not thinking of reaching a definitive point where the Ephesians community will come to be filled with God’s fullness as a climactic experience that is achievable and has been achieved, but that its aim would be to be continually being strengthened by the Spirit’s power and by knowing the surpassing love of Christ and so by these means being ever filled unto all God’s fullness. This may seem somewhat complicated but surely it is what Paul is envisaging.

Paul’s statement of 5:18 is for the Ephesians to go on being filled *with* or *by* the Holy Spirit. Some modern commentators favour ‘by’ because they have our present passage (3:14–19) in view, that is, our being filled unto God’s fullness. Thus the Holy Spirit is the agent of the believers being filled, but then filled with the fullness of God and not, strictly speaking, *with* the Spirit himself. In 3:16, ‘that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you [all believers] to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man’ (cf. Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6), working that power Christ had predicted would be in them as in Acts 1:8, ‘you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you’. Being in them he strengthens them. We know that believers from Pentecost onwards were filled more than once with the Holy Spirit, for example, Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 13:9.² Sometimes ‘filled with the Spirit’ as, for example in Acts 6:5 and 7:55 is saying that Stephen was habitually filled (*pleres*) with the Holy Spirit where Acts 4:8 with its aorist passive (*plestheis pneumatos hagion*) denotes a special moment of being filled. Even so, that does not mean Paul had in any sense been lacking in the fullness of the Spirit. This was a sudden filling to the full to meet a special need for action.

At the same time Paul is not praying, surely, that Christ may come to those who are already believers and indwell them but, taking Christ’s indwelling for a fact, is praying that by means of the strength imparted by the Spirit they may *by faith* work on the reality of the indwelling Christ in order to comprehend the incomprehensible love of that Christ, so that out of the comprehension they may be filled *unto* all God’s fullness. Verses 14–18 in all, show us what is required then to be filled unto all the fullness of God. In the early parts of our series we saw that ‘all the fullness of God’ was originally present in created Man by Man’s being in the image of God. The fall of Man, however, changed created Man as a true reflector of God to one who does not fully reflect God. Many of our early studies show into what dreadful state Man was

¹ Some translations have ‘filled with’ and some ‘filled unto’ but the jury is still out on the question—commentators are still debating the matter.

² Romans 8:9 indicates that the Spirit of Christ dwelled in all Christians. We do not speak here of whether being filled with the Spirit was habitual or whether there were special affusions of the Spirit at certain times. Acts 6:1–6 seems to indicate that some were markedly filled with the Spirit. ‘Full of the Spirit’ seems to indicate ‘habitually filled’.

drawn by the serpent and sin. It is out of that sin that fallen Man is now renewed by the means shown in Ephesians 3:14–19 and elsewhere in this and other Epistles. He is taken on to the fullness which he is now partly knowing, but then will fully know and be fully known (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). By this we mean ‘the new birth’ or regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, justification, adoption as sons of God—and so on. In short, the person is converted and comes to know the love of Christ.

Before we deal more fully with knowing the love of Christ and being filled unto God’s fullness, we need to see Paul has other prayers and injunctions in this letter to urge the readers to live the Christian life more fully. One powerful prayer is 1:15–21:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 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.

There his prayer is clear. These believers need ‘a *spirit* of wisdom and revelation’ in the knowledge of Christ, so that their eyes being opened they will know the hope to which they are called, the power by which they presently have life and the inheritance which will be theirs. For the rest we simply remark that Paul’s teaching was there to heighten their knowledge of the ‘Father of glory’ (1:17) and the ministry of the Son and the Spirit in the plan God has for the church which possesses the fullness of Christ, and ‘fills all in all’. It was also to inform them of the transformation of their hearts which had once had the Gentile ‘mind’ (4:17–24), and the ethical renewal from this state of being. The teaching was also about the battle Christ and his people carry on against ‘principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places’ (6:12, *passim*).

Armed with this Ephesian material we are now in a position to return to our thesis or proposition which is that in order to know the love of Christ we must see the state and condition of Man in sin as a result of original sin. Here we are speaking of his emptiness which has resulted from his rebellion against God and His plan, that is, the loss of the water of life (Jer. 2:13), the immediate filling of his being with ‘all manner of evil’ (Rom. 1:29ff.), his death and the ‘deathness of life’ (Rom. 5:12; Gen. 3:1–7), his being conscripted into the world-system of Satan (1 John 3:8a; Eph. 2:1–3), and his inability to attain to self-justifying righteousness (Gal. 2:16–18). Our thesis says that we come to know the incomprehensible love of Christ by seeing his work of incarnation, ministry of the Kingdom of God, his death on the cross, his burial and resurrection, his ascension, his coronation in heaven, and his present reigning over all. When a person genuinely sees the salvific work of Christ and is, himself, born again, receiving the infilling of the Spirit and the infilling of love (Rom. 5:5), then he is brought to union with Christ—that union and strengthening of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 3:14–18, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27 and 3:3. In that union the very Christ so indwells him that he *knows* Christ and his love. Out of such knowing he is filled unto all the fullness of God.

KNOWING CHRIST'S LOVE BY PROPITIATION

We have seen the dignity, high calling, serenity, and greatness of Man in creation and have seen the height from which he fell. Destined to be glorified by God at the end-time, as shown in 1 Corinthians 2:7, and Ephesians 1:2–7, it would appear that because of the Fall he would now be emptied of his creational glory and be 'filled with all manner of evil', and be 'without God and without hope in this world'. His fate—not his destiny³—would be everlasting death, that is, the 'second death'. Opposing the law of God he would be an everlasting transgressor without hope of justifying himself. According to the Scriptures, God's judgment and punishment of sin would be implacable, passing over nothing of human sinning.⁴ Somehow the sin and guilt of a person has to be dealt with by God's arrangement of propitiation, the principle of dealing with the guilt of human sin. Leviticus 17:10–14 is often quoted in this respect because 'the life of the flesh is in the blood'. God provides this propitiatory sacrifice, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life' (Lev. 17:11). Romans 3:23–26 (cf. 1 John 2:2, 4:10) shows that the propitiatory sacrifice is God's action in bringing about Man's redemption—that is, Man must believe that God has set forth Christ as a propitiation. This a person must believe is the true basis for his justification and redemption.

In order to understand this work of God we need to read Paul's development of God's wrath upon sin (Rom. 1:18 – 3:26).⁵ Even so, his statement is not just a bare proposition or a forensic transaction which the mind can grasp. It is in his suffering as God sets him forth (Rom. 3:25) that we understand the power of the sacrifice to destroy the guilt of sin. We must start, then, at Romans 1:18 and proceed to the end of the third chapter to see the power of the gospel to transform sinners.

Cause of Wrath

When we ask, 'How is God's wrath being revealed in the first chapter of Romans?', the answer must be 'By God giving Man up continually to his evil, that evil which he is deliberately practicing'. For the moment we will not examine this 'giving up' action of God but look at the evil Man is doing. The *first* part of this was his refusal to honour God and give Him thanks. The *second* was that he 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles', that is, committing idolatry. The *third* action was that he 'exchanged the truth [of] God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator'.

³ Christians do not use the term 'fate' to describe the outcome of their lives but the term 'destiny' as in the words 'destination' and 'predestination' which God promises His people. Destiny is linked with vocation, i.e. calling, and for the Christian is a glorious *telos* or completion. This destiny is an irreversible climax. 'Fate' is a term used by those who see no reasonable hope for their future and their 'end', but desire that it be good, as in 'luck'. Pessimists may desire a good end but they do not anticipate such 'luck'.

⁴ We should be aware throughout this presentation of mine regarding Man's sin and God's propitiation that many theologians and biblical commentators would not agree for a moment with my theology of Man's sinful condition and God's wrath upon sinners. For some this is more or less a proof of a pathology of morbidity. Such critics believe that the statement, 'God is love' dissolves just about all elements of my presentation. The problem that critics such as these believe that they know the nature of the subject—God—and the nature of the predicate—love. When 1 John 4:9–10 (cf. Rom.3:19–26) describe the nature of love it is inseparably linked with the act of propitiation. Without honestly researching the matter of propitiatory sacrifice as it is presented in Scripture we will not truly know the nature of God's love.

⁵ See my book *The Wrath of His Love* (NCPI, Blackwood, 2004) for a wider development of the subject.

The dishonour done to God by Man—Man who is made in God’s image—is indescribable. God’s wrath is always evoked by something that is evil. God is never described as wrath in the way He is described as light and love, but He is spoken of as having wrath, this wrath being provoked by evil and as being consistent with His holiness and love. If we look at the three elements Paul mentions (above) then we see Man has done a horrible thing and, indeed, continues to do so. If God were not wrathful in the face of these then He would not be holiness and love, and He would lack righteousness.

The Way or Modes of Wrath

Paul said that God’s wrath is being revealed. In what way is it revealed? Keeping in mind that fallen Man blinds himself as much to wrath as anything else so that he cannot see it, we nevertheless know that he is ever under that wrath. God gives him up to his sin and its guilt. This is seen in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. The verb ‘to give up’ (*paradidomi*)⁶ is used on these three occasions. It can mean ‘abandon’ or ‘abandon up to’ and it is used here in this sense. God personally, deliberately and with a view to the judgment and outcome of His act gave, and gives, sinful persons over to their own sin and guilt. That is to say they came under the power, operations and outcome of their own evil. This is God’s way of judgment: this is His way of wrath.

This is not an insight that is only Pauline. Jesus said that he who committed sin becomes the slave of sin. The writer of Proverbs 5:2 said, ‘The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is caught in the toils of his sin’. David in the 32nd Psalm showed the mental and emotional anguish that comes from unconfessed sins. Guilt, so to speak, boils within one, bringing much pain and damage. The writer of Psalm 31:10 also described what we must call ‘the guilt of sin’. He said, ‘For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away’. In the Old Testament there is what is called ‘the guilt of sin’. Psalm 32:5 and Jeremiah 33:8 refer to this. What it must mean is that when a person sins the sin has been perpetrated but its innate elements remain always with the culprit: neither the sin nor its constitutional elements ever pass away. We are speaking of the elements of guilt such as fear, dread, pollution, pain, shame, heaviness, confusion and many such things that remain with the sinner and he—or she—must continually experience them. If Christ as the Substitute of every person does not take these guilt elements and bear them in himself, then the wrath is never ended.

When, then, God gives sinful humans up to ‘the lusts of their own hearts’, ‘dishonourable passions’ and, finally, ‘a base mind and improper conduct’, then that sinful humanity suffers in the boiling maelstrom of the guilt of sin. An intense misery and anguish is the lot of such people. Moreover guilt is the powerful climate in which sin thrives and increases, and so the guilt is compounded and as it compounds, then in turn it further accelerates acts of sinning and so yet further increases the torment and suffering of the subject. This must be recognised as the wrath of God which is being revealed from heaven on sinners. We find it in Psalm 38—a Psalm which ought to be read by us all, and particularly those who deny that God is provoked to wrath by human sinning. It ought also to be read, especially verses 3 and 4, in conjunction with Psalm 32:

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy anger,

⁶ Note its uses in Romans 8:32; 2Corinthians 4:11; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:19; 5:2, 25.

nor chasten me in thy wrath!
For thy arrows have sunk into me,
and thy hand has come down on me.
There is no soundness in my flesh because of thy indignation;
there is no health in my bones because of my sin.
For my iniquities have gone over my head;
they weigh like a burden too heavy for me (Ps. 38:1–4).

On verses 3 and 4, Sir Richard Baker has a live comment:

‘Thine anger . . . my sin.’ I, alas! am as an anvil under two hammers; one of thine anger, another of my sin; both of them beating incessantly upon me; the hammer of thine anger beating upon my flesh and making that unsound; the hammer of my sin beating upon my bones and making them unquiet; although indeed both beat upon both; but thine anger more upon my flesh, as being more sensible; my sin more upon my bones, as being more obdurate. God’s anger and sin are the two efficient causes of all misery; but the procaccarctic [primary?] cause indeed is sin: God’s anger, like the house that Samson pulled upon his own head, falls not upon us but when we pull it upon ourselves by sin.⁷

Reverting to Romans 1:18–32 and the use in verses 24, 26, and 28 of God giving sinners up to their sin, thus compounding guilt and sin and bringing terrible misery upon those created in His image, the misery being His wrath, Leon Morris has this to say:

The verb *gave them over* shows that God is active and not passive in the process (cf. Ps. 81:12; Acts 7:42). This does not mean that he is vindictive. That would be untrue both to the facts of the case and to the apostle’s thought. Throughout this epistle Paul insists that God’s purpose is one of mercy (cf. 11:32). Elsewhere the situation is viewed from another angle: people gave themselves up to licentious behaviour (Eph. 4:19); they are responsible human beings. But here the thought is that God is active in the process. He shuts people up to the consequences of their sin so that they will see their error and look to him for mercy and for a better way. Notice that Paul does not call on God to punish sinners. *Rather, he has the profound thought that their immersion in their sin is itself their punishment* (cf. ‘one is punished by the very things by which he sins’, Wis. 11:16) (emphasis mine)⁸

Now we come to the matter of propitiation, lightly touched upon by us, above. It is important, for by propitiation we see God’s love as John affirms in 1 John 4:10. Also we wish to see it as Christ’s love in giving himself up as the propitiatory sacrifice as we read here in Romans 3:19–26, in Hebrews 2:17, and 1 John 2:2. It is the love which receives the wrath of God in the form of human guilt and bears it to exhaustion and extinction, or as Leon Morris would say, averts it from sinners by his—Christ’s—own self-bearing. At this point I would like to recommend an essay given at the South Australian Ministry School in 2004, titled ‘Man’s Existential State of Sinfulness’.⁹ In it are gathered together, briefly, the materials used relating to Man’s fall and his personal state of fallen being. We need to sense that terrible state of sinfulness so that we can recognise the love of God in releasing us from it. An example of both the state and the release from the state is given in Romans 5:1–11:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not

⁷ Quoted by Charles H. Spurgeon in his *The Treasury of David: An Expository and Devotional Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 2 (Guardian Press, Grand Rapids, 1976), p. 229.

⁸ *The Epistle to the Romans* by Leon Morris, Apollos, Leicester, 1988, p. 88.

⁹ *Grace upon Grace*, 2004 NCTM Ministry School, NCPI, Blackwood, 2004.

disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. *While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation.*

The action of love in propitiation is described in Romans 3:19–26:

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation [propitiation], by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.

We need to see the grace of God wonderfully set out in both these passages. Because the wrath of God is daily upon Man in the form of guilt which Man endures in his being and from which there is no escape, it would appear that Man is eternally bound in his guilt, shame and emptiness. The Father sets forth His Son as the propitiatory sacrifice in such manner that Christ takes up the guilt anguish and bears it in every part of his being. This is in order to be able to declare the sinner guiltless for Christ bears the guilt to the end. Man is thus declared guiltless or, as we might say, righteous before the law. Sin which Man does before God and against Him has the proper basis for forgiveness. God cannot forgive without sin being dealt with in its penalty (1 John 2:2; 4:10).

This must also be the basis on which God effects pardon. The sinner must receive it on that basis. At the same time the pollution of sin must be cleansed from a person (Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 10:22; cf. Rev. 7:14), for Man was created pure and if he were not de-polluted could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:18–21; Eph. 5:5). If his conscience were not purged from 'dead works', that is, 'from sins', then he would be unable to worship (serve) the living God. First Corinthians 6:11 says, 'you were *washed*, you were *sanctified*, you were *justified* in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God'.

If we were to only go this far then it would be a powerful work by Christ to act in love for us. Just think of how he effects the release of the human spirit, the liberation from guilt, the utter reconciliation with God, the walking in the freedom of one's whole being—'free indeed!' Certainly the event of conversion in a person's life is unforgettable.¹⁰ It may be many years before all the significance of it comes to the person who has come into salvation. We saw above in Romans chapter 5 that the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

¹⁰ Every person must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God. All persons forgiven and justified by God are saved by His grace. Even so, it is true that whereas for some this is a clear experience yet for others it is a hidden event: we might say it is subterranean, perhaps not even felt but assuredly known to have happened.

No understanding of grace and salvation is possible apart from the Holy Spirit.¹¹ Paul then explains that that love was further shown by Christ dying for us when we were utterly helpless to do anything for ourselves. No one dies for a righteous man but Christ died for us as sinful men and women. John says in 1 John 4:9–10 that the Father shows His love for us by sending His Son into the world so that life will come to us. He continues, ‘In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation [propitiation] for our sins’.

The Love That Liberates: The Work of the Cross

There is much more to the work of the cross which shows us the love of the Father and the Son which is brought to us when the Spirit unveils it within our hearts. We refer to the Study titled ‘Man’s Existential State of Sinfulness’ in the 2004 NCTM Ministry School notes (*Grace upon Grace*, pp. 35–40). We have also dealt with it in this series when dealing with Man’s sin and emptiness. The love of Christ we began to approach under the heading of ‘Human Existence under the Tyrants’. We now need to re-engage our minds by looking at the tyrants and their way of abusing Man and keeping him in bondage.

The tyrants are Satan and his forces, Sin as a personalised force, the Flesh as a powerful drive operating in Man’s ego, Law, Guilt, God’s Wrath, and Conscience operating along with the dread of Death, and so Emptiness being an existential power dominating Man who is bereft of God. Being bereft of God—self-bereft—he is not a victim but the perpetrator of evil which brings him to the sorry pass into which he has come. By this we mean that Man chose to set in action the tyrants we have mentioned, although doubtless he did not see the bondage into which he was bringing himself. When a person moves outside obedience to God in His nature and His plan then he is subject to all forms of evil.

We will not repeat the ways in which Man comes into, and is held, in bondage. ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning’ means that Man is yoked with Satan (1 John 3:8). Sin, as we have noted, is a strong personalised force holding us in deep bondage with its power of guilt and being the very sting of death. Man in guilt is under the dread of death and fears the judgment of God. Conscience sharpens the pain of guilt and so Man is never at peace. His emptiness keeps him in states of anger. His moral impotence is the basis of Satan’s scorn and accusation.

There is nothing Man can do to get himself out of his sinful state. He may try to develop a righteousness, but this takes him into deeper states of emptiness since he cannot be saved by the works of the law, for apart from God righteousness cannot be attained. If only his law account could be cleared! Moral demands upon him are as high as when he was once innocent. When the thought and the intention of any deed are counted as the deed itself, then what hope does Man have?¹²

The love of Christ begins to be seen as initiated by God the Father who sends His Son to become a man so as to redeem humanity. Were he to have saved himself from

¹¹ Many readers of the Scriptures are greatly angered by the thought of Man needing propitiation, and the presentation of Christ as the propitiatory sacrifice. They reject the idea of God being wrathful against Man. Of course God is not wrath Himself. As we will see He is love, but then because He *is* love He *has* wrath, provoked to it by the evil of His creatures. By His love He, within Himself, within His Son, bears the wrath which must issue on sin and on its perpetrator, Man.

¹² Jesus says for a person to look after another with lust in the heart is in fact an adulterer. If anyone hates his brother he is, in fact, a murderer.

incarnation then he could have saved no one. To deny the death of the cross would have been to deny bearing the sins of the whole human race. It would have been to leave sin to its own pollution and Man to 'everlasting shame and contempt'. Were Man of himself have been able to bear the guilt of his sin and survive death, he could have saved himself, but such cannot happen without a cross and Jesus bearing the sin of Man and the wrath of God. As Anne Ross Cousin's hymn describes the dread, yet glorious event:

To Thee and to thy Christ, O God,
We sing—we ever sing;
For He hath crushed beneath His rod
The world's proud rebel king.
He plunged in His imperial strength
To gulfs of darkness down;
He brought His trophy up at length,
The foiled usurper's crown.¹³

The facts are that when Christ bears the wrath of God on a person's sin then that one is made 'free indeed'. Guilt and pollution of sin are destroyed. Devilish accusation is now without any basis. The dreaded law is transformed to the way of love. The conscience is cleansed, wrath has ceased. Evil has no hold on the person who has been declared righteous. This one's sins are no longer remembered by God. He has been born from above; and is now sanctified by faith. So goes the biblical record. So goes the historical record also which tells of lives fired with the response of love to God's love.

What is never to be forgotten is that this is the act of Christ's love for us. Behind it, so to speak, stands the Father, the Initiator of the act but it is the Son who 'bears our sins in his body on the tree'. The Father 'made him to be sin' for us; he 'who knew no sin'. The Father 'laid on him the iniquity of us all'. Much, much more, could be said. For example, the whole of Christ's earthly life, his being the Second Adam, his work of liberating those bound in sin, sickness and emptiness. Even so, the great event of resurrection was, along with the cross, the work that liberated from the fear of death and propelled redeemed humanity into eternal life so that Jesus could say, 'whoever lives and believes in me shall never die' (John 11:26).

Biblical Christian history attests to the stunning change in human beings when the gospel of grace came through to the world. More praise and joy, weeping and laughing has come through to us than through any other human being. The utter relief, joy and love in the biographies of human beings, to say nothing of the ethical revolution wrought in and by the same irrefutable salvation. The world changed and the world came to life on that day that Christ died, and on that other day when he rose as Conqueror and King of the human race—the new race. We have stated, time and again, that love comes only from God, but then it has come!

The Love That Empowers Us; The Work of the Resurrection, the Ascension and Reigning

Just as the cross was a thing or word of power (1 Cor. 1:18) so there came to be 'the power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:10) for now Christ was Lord over all creation (Eph. 1:19–23), and that means he is for ever to be 'King of kings and Lord of lords'

¹³ New Creation Hymn Book (NCPI, Blackwood, 2001), no. 78, v.3.

and ‘ruler of kings on earth’ (Rom. 14:9; Rev. 1:5; 17:14; 19:16). If we understand what God has always been about in His plan in time then it is that He is establishing His special people—Israel—in the Old Testament. In the New Testament His special people spring from Israel and being linked with it are His *ecclesia*, His church. Israel had been there to witness to the nations as the Priest-Nation of all the nations. The new Community—the *ecclesia*—was to be the people and army of Christ and has been sent to all the nations to bring the gospel of the Kingdom to them. The following tells us of the power of his resurrection, ascension and reigning. This power not only will help us all to be partners with Christ in his present and future ministry, but also tell us of Christ and his present working love for us, in us and through us:

(a) *Jesus’ resurrection has made him Lord over all.* He was raised from the dead by the Father (Rom. 6:4; Acts 2:24, 32). This is God’s affirmation of him—‘because I go to the Father’ (John 16:10). ‘He is designated Son of God *in power* according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead’ (Rom. 1:4). He is also thus proclaimed Lord (Acts 2:36; 14:9). He is ‘first and the last, and the living one’. He ‘died, and behold, he is alive for ever more’. He has ‘the keys of death and of Hades’ (Rev. 1: 17–18). His Lordship and Kingship is in the light of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 and his rulership over all the nations. His authority and power is over all the earth (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36).

(b) *The present power of his resurrection* is that he has ‘abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel’ (2 Tim. 1:10) because he is ‘the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep’. As he has risen so we shall rise, for he is the first born from the dead. ‘In Christ shall all be made alive!’ (1 Cor. 15:20–22). Without Christ there was no hope. Now ‘we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Pet. 1:3).

(c) *He has brought moral power to his people by co-crucifixion* (Rom. 6:1–23; Col. 3:1–3; Gal. 2:20). The power of sin, the sting of death has been defeated since he brought life and immortality to life. So the union of Christ with his people brings moral power for holy and righteous living. This union is Christ’s life in his people presently by means of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 3:14–19; Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:9–11). All is life—Christ’s risen life—and nothing is death.¹⁴

Up to this point we have seen what we count as love for us by the Father in the sending of His Son. We have also seen the love of the Son in becoming incarnate and doing those great objectively perceived works, first in his ministry in Palestine, and then in his death, resurrection, ascension and reigning at the right hand of the Father. Point (c) of the quote immediately above may be said to be the beginning of the account of what Christ does within us by means of his union with us, and his dwelling in us, but we will leave dealing with that action for the moment.

The Love of Christ Which Deals With Human Emptiness

In our first studies we took up the matter of Man’s glory as innocent creatures, showing how substantial he was, how being in the image of God was his splendour, and how beautiful was the destiny set before him. From innocency he ‘fell’ into the ways of evil and refused to worship God. True worship accepts and obeys God as He is. It honours Him in all that He is, and is deeply grateful for God *as He is* and for His being and work as Creator. We saw that by his rejection of God Man comes into futility—‘for although they knew God they did not honour 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

¹⁴ See Study 11 in *Grace upon Grace*, p. 77.

immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles (Rom. 1:21–23). At this point we do not want to repeat all we previously said in regard to emptiness but reiterate that Man did not want to have God in his knowledge. He wanted another kind of knowledge, a knowledge of the gods or idols so that they would supply what God would not supply. The function and purpose of the idol's operations and the infrastructure of the world would be on another basis than that set out by God in Genesis 1:26–30.

Since none of this was essentially foundational to God's purpose every act outside the will of God is 'vain' and 'futile'. The Adamic mind is always futile. Not drinking of God, 'the fountain of living water', Man has such a raging thirst that he must devise reservoirs of his own, which prove to be unsatisfactory. Pursuing a God-rejecting life, Man must become necessarily a sinner of the deepest dye. Proverbs 5:22–23 is one description of him: 'The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and *he is caught in the toils of his sin*. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is lost.' So then there is no way out of his emptiness and futility. He is locked into the doom of judgment. The wrath of God is upon him.

We have seen that all this being true, the love and grace of God are for him. Jeremiah wrote, 'I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in a man who walks to direct his steps', but Jesus said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me'. This we have seen in this present study, that the wrath of God on God-rejection and its sins must now be understood in the light of the coming into this world of grace (John 1:14–18; Titus 2:11–14). The scene then is set for seeing the incomprehensible love of Christ and for being 'filled with all the fullness of God'.

The work of the Father planned before the foundation of the world tells us God was not shocked when the human race reneged on Him in Eden. He knew what He was about when He tested Man and his future by a deceitful serpent in a beautiful garden. That first, hideous failure did not put *finis* to humanity's future. Paul tells us that before creation, God decreed 'a secret and hidden wisdom of God . . . for our glorification' (1 Cor. 2:6–16) which meant He had issued a *fiat*, determined a result of His wisdom, predestined an outcome of momentous proportions—namely that He would have a *people* for Himself, a *family* in all eternity which would set forth His Being as commensurate with His Being as Creator, as Father, as Redeemer as All-in-All¹⁵—as Love.

¹⁵ This 'All-in-All' can also be called 'everything to every one' (1 Cor. 15:24–28). What more, then, can be said except that 'everything' and 'everyone' has its being, its identity, its destiny and its life in Him. In another way of speaking God has His whole love working the 'All-in-All' or His planned destiny for the entire creation.

MAN COMING INTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD—2

THE GOAL OF THE CHANGE

All things begin to be known to us in the *proton* which is 'the beginning of the end', and likewise in the *eschaton* which is 'the end of the beginning'. We can also see that the end explains the nature and purpose of the beginning. In 1 Corinthians 2:6–10 we see this:

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of 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,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

This plan of God before time for Man's glorification by the end of time shows what will be seen at the end time. Likewise the clear statement of Ephesians 1:3–14 points us to the goal of Man planned by God:

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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

It is clear, here, that redeemed Man is designed to be glorified at the end of time and that those who are presently alive are going through a process of glorification through the working of the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit (see 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:9–10). In that process the community of God is being continually filled 'unto all the fullness of God'.

If these statement were not enough we have the whole of the *eschaton* set out for us in both Old and New Testaments. Especially do we have Christ's teaching on the glories to come, the further teaching of the Epistles and then the magnificent prophecy of the Revelation in which all things draw themselves up to the *telos*, the completion of all things. At the same time we have seen that fallen but as yet unredeemed Man is in a dreadful state of being. In fact most of our studies have been connected with the state of this person. We have seen him as emptied of God and so

of the true knowledge of God, and as one who has been ‘filled with all manner of wickedness’, as described in Romans 1:28–32:

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct. They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

We have seen, also, that Man lives under the tyranny of many vicious enemies, such as Satan; Satan’s world system composed of fallen angelic creatures, principalities and powers; sin; human ‘flesh’ of evil desires and action; fear of death; the wrath of God; a sinful conscience (a conscience conscious of one’s own evil); the law of God—and so on. As Ephesians 2:12 reminds God-rejecting Man that he was, ‘at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world’, also (Eph. 2:1–3), ‘you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.’

What now remains for us is to see how the change takes place in us so that we are emptied of all evil and filled ‘unto all the fullness of God’, which is the same as saying we are forgiven all sins, purified from all moral pollution, and liberated from all tyrants that rule over us. We naturally ask the question, ‘Can this possibly be true?’ and the answer is, ‘Yes. Christ said that he who commits sin is the slave of sin. but if the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed.’

THE LIBERATION THROUGH THE LIBERATING LORD

What we are about to examine with a view to believing it and acting upon it is of such a nature that it is not to be taken lightly. Our own personal case must be so seriously taken that our lives will be transformed. Having been transmogrified by sin and evil we will now be transformed into the full image of God and be released from the cruelty of the many tyrants which have ruled our lives. I would like to illustrate this change by referring to the three and a half years many of us lived in Japanese Prisoner of War Camps. So harsh and oppressive were the conditions, and so incarcerated were we, that hope of escape was nil. We starved painfully all those years. Suddenly the war was over, the Japanese were defeated. We were on the edge of release. What joy we felt, what happy anticipation, and then what amazing liberation! How wonderful to come back to normal, to return to our land and our people and the life we loved!

I can remember saying to myself Psalm 126 in the *King James Version* over and over, so apt it was and so close to our case:

When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,
we were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with singing;
then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things for them.

The LORD hath done great things for us;
whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
as the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves *with him*.

The nation of Israel must have felt something like this. Indeed Psalm 126 arose out of their experience as a sinful nation. They went through judgment for their sins, and then liberation through the grace of their Covenant–Redeemer. How they loved their land! How they had loved the place of worship and so much so that they would not sing the songs of Sion in a strange land. They did sing however, as in Psalm 43:3–4:

O send out thy light and thy truth:
let them lead me;
let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
and to thy tabernacles.
Then will I go unto the altar of God,
unto God my exceeding joy:
yea, upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God my God.

The fervent spirit of the worshipper is one of great joy. To go to the altar of God is to go to God Himself, ‘my exceeding joy’. To have that joy is to break into songs. All we have seen of Man’s dreadful state which arose from rejection of God, refusal to worship Him and render thanksgiving, is now put into reverse. Man’s worship of idols in the place of the living God brought distortion and every form of sexual immorality, sexual perversion, homicide, broken relationships and evil, until it could be said of these perpetrators, ‘the way of peace they have not known’. If not peace, then not love and joy also. Love, joy and peace are the birthright of those created in the image of God. Man senses that and cannot understand why they are absent from him. The tension Man lives in when bereft of God, when refusing to be in His image, is existential anguish and pain and perversion. It is the way of the idols. When salvation comes then love and joy and peace become the true way of life.

If we understand the importance of worship in Israel,¹ the pain that came to the nation when dismembered, and the weary days of exile, then we will understand the sheer joy when they were returned to their Eden—Canaan—and the foundations were laid for the new temple:

And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel; and they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, ‘For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever toward Israel.’ And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy; so that the people could not distinguish the

¹ Worship is not only primary to those of Israel, but to all created in the universe. It is Man’s source of wellbeing. That is why history has been the battle for worship. The competition of all nations, idols, cultures gathers around worship. Misplaced worship brings human beings into their greatest tragedy.

sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard afar (Ezra 3:10–13).

I have chosen this quote because it relates to the joy of Psalm 126. I am suggesting that salvation is a matter of sheer joy and that we cannot understand John's two-fold statement, 'God is love', unless we see the dreadful state of Godless Man, and understand the immensity of the love of Christ to redeem him from his state of spiritual aridity and moral evil. Any diminution of his indispensable suffering must be a diminution of God's love.

THE GREATNESS OF THE GRACE OF GOD

We are told of the grace of God in Exodus 34:6–7 and other parallel passages which speak of God's Covenant being in Israel and indeed in the whole world. How powerful is Ephesians 1:7, 'In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace'. While the verse does not explain the *how* of the working of grace, we can realise what immensity of grace in the qualitative sense must be required to work total redemption including 'the forgiveness of our trespasses'. What action is that that can go to the depths of a person's sin, its pollution, degradation, rebellion against God, with all its power and penalty and utterly deliver that person into the new purity, holiness and pure worship of God? That is why Paul speaks of '*the immeasurable riches of his grace* in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus'. Here we pause again to think of the vast working of grace in a sinful world. In Acts 4:23–34 the gathered company of believers is filled with the Holy Spirit and it is said that 'great grace was upon them all'; i.e. all believers were enabled to speak with power, and the love of the community was that 'they had everything in common'. In this Book of Acts it is grace which works in so many ways.

So Paul in Titus 2:11–14 can speak of the coming of Christ as effecting complete salvation and training the new community—the *am segullah* of the OT, and the *laos periousios* of the NT—i.e. the *ecclesia*. In John 1:14 the writer speaks of Jesus in his incarnation as 'full of grace and truth', and adds in verse 16, 'And of his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace'. This tells us that grace in its immensity effects full transformation in billions of people who are powerless to effect any change, of themselves, in the condition which Romans 5:6–11 shows us to be, i.e. helpless, sinful, under wrath and unreconciled. 'Even though law came in to increase the trespass; yet [but] where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Rom. 5:20).

This paragraph above tells us of the amazing power of grace to meet sin at every twist and turn. Nothing can negate what grace does, for grace is simply God working His love for Man's emancipation and full, irreversible transformation—his entire salvation. How great, then, that work of the cross, resurrection and reigning! How powerful the Three Persons in the consequent working out of history! To use C. S. Lewis's book-title, *Surprised by Joy*, we repeat what is said above in Psalm 126 and reiterate that the love of Christ is seen brilliantly in his person and work of salvation.

THE ROUTING OF THE ENEMIES OF GOD AND MAN

Human beings know the pain of having enemies from among their own race. The curse began with Cain's enmity towards his own brother. In fact it began with Man's

enmity to God. Some studies ago we examined the nature of these enemies—‘tyrants’ as we called them. Because Israel represented God and His true worship to the world it was forever persecuted by those nations, incited as they were by the idolatry of the times. Zechariah, the Father of John the Baptist, stated two items in his *Benedictus*: ‘that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us’, and, ‘that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life’ (Luke 1:71, 74, 75). This action we must see as the love of Christ.

We have already examined the enemies, their hatred, oppression and darkness so that we will not repeat our studies on Satan, Satan and his world (aeon) forces, sin, the flesh, law, guilt, conscience and death. We will seek to comprehend the defeat of those enemies. In passing we need to note that in themselves the law, conscience and God’s wrath are not as the other evil enemies, but are God’s way of bringing men and women into conviction of sin and so into liberty from the other enemies.

Hebrews 2:14–15 needs to be examined, ‘Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage’. Satan’s special weapon is guilt, from which comes human fear of death, so that when human guilt is removed by the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ on the cross, then so is the fear of death and Satan as accuser loses his power. This is borne out in Revelation 12:9–11:

And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. 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.’

Because of this victory over Satan, John can write to young men and say, ‘You are strong and have overcome the evil one’ (1 John 2:12, 13). In 1 John 3:8 he also says, ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.’ James can write in a letter (4:7), ‘Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.’ Peter can write in similar terms, ‘Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world’ (1 Peter 5:8, 9). Paul can write to his readers in Ephesians 6:10–18, speaking of the battle with Satan, ‘that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil’. In Romans 16:19–20 that ‘the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet’.

If we compare Hebrews 2:14–15 with Colossians 2:14–15 we will see that *the principalities and powers* were unhanded when Christ ‘cancelled the bond [of the law] which stood against us with its legal demands’. By this means, God made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Christ. So then Christ fulfilling the demand of the law liberated us from the penalty of the law, and thus from evil powers of Satan’s ‘world’ or ‘aeon’.

Whilst we are looking at the defeat of the enemies we ought to continue to see the immense joy which comes from primary liberation and distributive liberations. We are seeing that these enemies are already defeated, and we have the good of this

freedom as we stand firmly in the victory of the cross. We also need to remember that Christ, who has defeated the enemies at the cross, is now, in this *eschaton*, putting them under his feet until all of them are destroyed (1 Cor. 15:24–28). This is, of course, in accordance with Psalms 2 and 110 and also with predictions in the Old Testament of his coming to be both Messiah and ‘Son of Man’. In Luke 4:18–19 Jesus spoke from Isaiah 61:1–2 of his liberating ministry, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ In Luke 11:14–23 he spoke of Satan as ‘the Strong Man’, but then of himself as ‘the Stronger than the Strong Man’ who would invade the Strong Man’s fortress and defeat him. In John’s Gospel 8:31–36 he spoke of liberating believers from the slavery of sin, and in 10:7–18 he spoke of being the Good Shepherd who would defeat the murderous wolf and bring life to his own flock.

In regard to *the flesh* (of which we have already spoken in our August Study, pages 8–10, as being the principle of *epithumia*, i.e. ‘lust’ or ‘evil desire’ and often linked with ‘the old man’ (*palaios anthropos*), and have pointed out that the power of the flesh was defeated at the cross: ‘And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires’. Faith believes what has happened. Likewise Romans 8:1–8 shows us that the gospel—‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus’—has liberated us from the flesh, so that in Romans 8:13, Paul can say, ‘for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live’. Again in Galatians 5:13–26 Paul speaks of the warring between the flesh of Man and the Holy Spirit. The action of the flesh brings the hideous ‘works of the flesh’, whereas the working of the Spirit in a person and community brings the wonderful harvest of the Spirit, the fruit which makes for fullness over and against the works which make for fearful emptiness.

The *enemy of sin* we saw previously arose when Man listened to the deceitful voice of the serpent. The power of death lies in the sin of Man as also the power of sin lies in the death of Man (Rom. 5:12–21). We have traced the dreadful power of this enemy but now we see that through the cross the power of both has been destroyed. Romans 6:1–23 shows us that by being crucified with Christ, buried with him in his death and raised again with him in his resurrection, the believer is *freed* from sin as Jesus promised would be the case (John 8:31–38). Romans 6:7 says, ‘For he who has died is freed [is justified] from sin’. This means that the power of sin over Man is cancelled out, for the power of sin lies in the guilt of Man, but Jesus has dealt with that guilt and so Man is justified by faith in the act of grace which took place in the cross (Rom. 3:19–26). Romans 6 tells us not to obey sin since we are ‘dead to sin and alive to God’. Man in Christ is more powerful than sin.

We note that sin has power by the law (cf. Rom. 7:7–12) because of the guilt of the law (1 Cor. 15:54–57; Col. 2:14–15) but that crucified to the law humanity has freedom from sin. Thus we see that both sin and death are defeated. Ours is now the life of freedom! By his death we are delivered from sin and death, and live a risen life (Col. 3:1–3).

At this point we need to realise how free we are from the power and penalty of sin. The whole of sin-indebtedness has been totally cleared. This has deeply affected *the conscience*. Because of the cleansing of the cross the conscience is clear. Hebrews 9:14 says, ‘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'. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of Christ making 'purification for sins', and 1 Corinthians 6:11 tells us that firstly we were washed, then sanctified and then justified through the cross.

Looking back on our first studies on emptiness, our being filled 'with all manner evil', we see how fearful it was to have a conscience which was seared, conscious of sin and filled with dead works and actions. What a marvellous relief to be so purified that we can discount that bondage of the past and again worship God from a heart that is pure! How blessed are the pure in heart!

This same heart has been freed from *the wrath of God* being poured out now, and at the final assize, because at the cross Christ bore all wrath in his propitiatory sacrifice (1 John 4:9–10; Rom. 3:19–26). John writes that the atoning sacrifice is the expression of God's love. Paul does not mention love but shows the sacrifice of atonement has made Man one with God again. The Fall has been reversed and now Man is upright again, in Christ. This means there is no fear of law and judgment. It means all guilt has been banished and in its place is the joy of salvation.

Seeing then that fallen Man has been liberated from the powers of Satan, his 'world' community, from fear of death, from the power of God's wrath, from sin in its power, penalty and pollution, from his own wretched fleshliness, and the anguish and dread of an unclean conscience, and his insubstantial world of vanity, emptiness and raging thirst, how wonderful then is seeing the God he despised and rejected, as 'the God of all love'. What amazing power it has been that has transformed humanity transmogrified by the Fall, into the image of God again! Liberation is one thing—and a marvellous thing—but recreation into the new Man is thrilling beyond measure. It causes us to sing the words of Psalm 126 again and again:

When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,
we were like them that dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with singing:
then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
The LORD hath done great things for us;
whereof we are glad.
Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
as the streams in the south.
They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves *with him*.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MAN OF EMPTINESS

Man as created—i.e. as in the image of God, a little less than God, for a time a little lower than the angels, with all things under his feet and destined to judge angels and be to God a kingdom of priests and the Father's special community—this Man is the one we studied in the opening of this series. We saw how noble he was and what a future he had set before him by God. How peaceful, joyful, loving and holy he must have been. Commissioned by God for a wonderful ministry in the universe, he knew God's plan and goal for all creation. He had been created to prophetic, priestly and royal serving to God and all creatures.

Filled with special powers to witness to God's glory to a whole creation he was *imago dei*, the image of God. Yet this one, so filled with God, became a creature so vain, so empty, that one would be forced to believe God had made a horrible mistake in creating him. His story is tragic. How tragic it was we have also seen in the opening part of this series. We ask whether God could transform him into the creature he had once been, and so in grace and love could make him a being of nobility and love. That is now our task—to give the answer of God's marvellous grace in reinstating Man to what he was—and more!

The first few chapters of Genesis give us a broad and wonderful view of creation at the beginning, Man included. We have spoken of regarding these chapters as the *proton*, the beginning which will develop into the *eschaton*, so that the *eschaton*—the closing era—will be the *telos* or completion of God's history in time for His creation. Matthew 19:28 talks of this new world, 'Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world [*en te paliggenesia*] when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'. The *paliggenesia*, 'the new world', is 'the re-generation' or 're-birth' and is referred to in Mark 10:30 and in Luke 18:30 as 'the age to come'. The word is used only once again in the NT, in Titus 3:5, 'he saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit'. Other words are used in regard to 'new birth' some of which are related to *paliggenesia*. In Titus 3:5, Paul speaks of 'the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit'. Other references relating to the new birth are Matthew 19:28; John 1:13; 3:1–14; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3, 23; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18. This new birth is sometimes compared with natural birth. In all cases it is an act of God and never of Man.

In John 3:1–14 the term 'new birth' is linked with the cross. This is also the case in 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Galatians 6:15 where the term 'new creation' is related to the cross. 1 Peter 1:3 can be linked with the cross and the resurrection whilst verse 23 can be linked with the word, i.e. the gospel. Behind new birth and new creation there is always the action of the Holy Spirit.

Linked with the use of the word 'regeneration' are words such as 'new person', 'new creation' (Job 14:14 LXX; Isa. 65:17; Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17), 'restoration' (Acts 1:6; 3:21). What comes through to us is the idea that because something is old—such as 'the old man', 'old creation' in contradistinction to a new creation—that there is always the possibility that God can make what is 'first' into something which is new though not necessarily different. Rather it is renewed, restored, and reborn. Revelation 21:1–4 speaks of 'a new heaven and a new earth' which replace 'the first heaven' and 'the first earth', so that God can say, 'I make all things new'. In 2 Peter 3:12 the writer seems to be saying the first heaven and earth will be *renewed* by fire rather than first heaven and earth being destroyed and then a completely new heaven and earth being created. In this sense the New Testament seems to be saying all that was first and then fell—and was emptied—has to go through the crucible of the cross to be killed, buried, raised again, so that its life being 'hid with Christ in God' will emerge at the *telos*, 'when Christ who is our life appears' and we shall also appear with him in glory.

One hopes that with this deluge of words and terms we will have grasped the fact that Christ in his incarnation came primarily to redeem Man and restore him, or re-pristiniate him, thus bringing him again to be what it is to be full as the creature of God.

The cross, the death and burial, the rising again, and the ascension which were suffering vicariously—i.e. on our behalf—will seen also to be indispensable to our being born again, i.e. begotten from on high. This leads us to contemplate the passages of Ephesians 4:17–32 and Colossians 3:1–25.

In the Ephesian passage Paul is saying that they did not learn from Christ to live after the manner of Gentiles. That life of darkness and immorality was never recommended. What they learned regarding Christ was that they were to put off (*apothesai*) the old humanity and its corruption and to put on [*endusasthai*] the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (*RSV*).² The believers were taught two actions: (i) to put off what is of the old humanity; and (ii) to put on what is of the new humanity. That means that the new person should be put on and the life of that new person should flow, transformation happening in the act of living out that person. It surely has reference to the Adam who failed ('put off') and the New Person, the new Adam ('put on').

The Colossians passage (3:1–25) is surely linked with the Ephesians passage. Verses 9 to 11 need to be read with Ephesians 4:22–24:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature [humanity] with its practices and have put on the new nature [humanity], which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Here Paul is saying that the new nature 'is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. Here *renewed* has to do with new birth, restoration, new creation. Man who was in the image of his creator (God) is now being recreated in that image, and the image before them is really Christ. In Galatians 3:27 Paul says, 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ'. Both references are to do with 'all one in Christ Jesus', hence Galatians 3:28 says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

Now we can gather together our thoughts, and they are these, 'The fallen Man, the sinner, has reversed the image in his actions so that what was true of that image has been for the most part defaced or destroyed. It may even be said to be operated in reverse—i.e. composed of "self acts" such as "self-love", "self righteousness"—and so on. Because the image is foundational to being truly human, i.e. is ontological, then God has determined to renew Man, even unto resuming his role of being in the image of God. For this to happen God sent His Son into the world to do that which would be the basis of His salvation and so of new birth. Sin and evil being what they are, then only what God had planned could be successful.' Whilst we could spend a whole paper examining this extraordinary happening, its act and its meaning, yet the biblical presentations of God's way of redeeming Man are convincing and lead us to believe that what God does as Father, Shepherd, Redeemer and King can indeed bring Man to pardon for his sins, justification by grace, and the stunning experience of new birth. God creates, Satan decreates, and then, through Christ and the Spirit He recreates.

It is fitting then that we come to the point to which Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1–2. He has been telling his readers of the mercies of God in eleven chapters of wholesome doctrine and seems deeply moved himself. So he says:

² Andrew T. Lincoln in *The Word Commentary*, vol. 42, *Ephesians* (Word, Waco, 1990), p. 287 translates verse 24, 'and that you should put on the new person who is created in God's likeness in the righteousness and holiness which comes from the truth'.

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.

He began his letter by speaking of the power of the gospel. Early on he began to speak of Man's rebellion and especially his refusal to worship the Creator. Worship, as we have seen, is the primary action of Man, and to worship wrongly is to do damage to one's self. It is also the deepest insult to God. Paul is saying that only God's mercies can lead us back to true worship. Look at the Scripture quoted and see what is pure worship and what motivates it. We too have been speaking of the idolatrous worship by Man and the loss he suffers through it. Now we see that true worship is by a living body presented to its Maker and Redeemer because of His great mercies. This is true worship, worship in the Spirit. In that worship Man refuses to be conformed by the world and its principles. At the same time the new person in Christ is being transformed by the renewing of his mind. This is the renewal of new birth, restoration, of new creation. In fact it is obedience which is love for God through His love for us. At the centre of it all is Christ's love of such amazing quality in working our salvation that we have to agree it is incomprehensible.

Nothing in the new life is without the presence of Christ. We do not receive an eternal life which is something of its own. He did not offer us a resumption of a damaged immortality—damaged by sin. There never was such a thing. He offered us eternal life—something Man had never had. To compass the measure of Christ's love in which he undertook to bring life to us we yet have to see beyond, even, what we have already had the privilege to see.

MAN COMING INTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD—3

'FILLED UNTO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD'

We come now to the capping of our studies on 'The Fullness of God and Man'. We launched our series from Ephesians 3:14—19:

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God (*NASB*).

This prayer is for the saints of the church at Ephesus; hence it is in the second person plural; that is, Paul is seeing the church being filled with God's fullness as a community with all that that would mean; hence the whole church being strengthened, as in verse 20's benediction—'Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us'. Thus the people of God corporately—which includes each member singularly—are being filled unto all the fullness of God.

We have noted that, essential to being so filled, those at Ephesus will: (i) 'be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man' so that; (ii) 'Christ may dwell in your [their] hearts through faith', so that they will; (iii) be 'rooted and grounded in love', the outcome of which will be that they, together, will be appraised of the dimensions of Christ's love; thus (iv) they will be filled unto all God's fullness.

God's fullness is His whole Being, and Man's created fullness is his being in the total, undefaced and undiminished image of God's fullness. This equally constitutes his true human being as it is given by God to be received with great responsive worship by Man so that, at root, Man is obedient to His Maker. We have observed that Man—that is, the man and the woman together as 'one flesh'—is constituted as creature to the Creator, son to the Father, and subject to the King. We repeat: only as Man lives in loyal obedience to God does he fulfil his humanity as created. Lacking this obedience he is related to 'that ancient serpent the devil' (Rev. 12:9), and is a deceived person. This can be seen by John's teaching in his First Epistle where in 2:4 and 5:3 to love God is to keep His commandments. At the point of Satan's temptation in Genesis 3:1—6, Man could not have loved God, since he is shown as disobedient.

THE FULLNESS OF THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE¹

If we take Abel to be the first nominated person of faith, hope and love then we can see that Seth—born later to the first couple—in being father of Enosh, was the cause

¹ This section on God's true community is dealt with usefully in my book *The Beloved Community of God. Yesterday, Today and Forever* (Redeemer Baptist Press. Castle Hill. 2002). Indeed, it is a full and detailed treatment.

of men calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:25–26). It seems to have been an amazing enlarging of the community of faith, hope and love, even though eventually the whole world was filled with corruption and violence and had to be destroyed by the flood. Hebrews chapter 11 records much concerning this true worshipping community. The choice of the idolater Abram and his wife Sarai brings God's special covenant people into being and action. Justified persons constitute the company of God's people in a special way. The establishment of God's 'people for his own possession' (Gen. 12:1–3; Deut. 7:6ff.; Exod. 19:5–6; cf. Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9–10) meant, in essence, that the eschatological community was formed as the community of faith, hope and love. The references we have quoted have great importance in the history of the human race, showing as they do the purpose God has for the end-time and for all eternity; namely, that the community is God's *am segullah* or *laos periousios*—'a people for his own'—spoken of in the New Testament as 'a kingdom and priests' (1 Pet. 2:4–10; Rev. 1:5(b)–6; 5:10; cf. 20:4–6). The term for this love community in the Old Testament was 'congregation' (*qahal*) and in the New Testament 'congregation' (*ecclesia*); that is, the 'called out' and 'called together' community for accomplishing what God had commissioned the first couple to be and to do in the worship and service of Himself as in Genesis 1:26–30. This was in order to build the love-community throughout history, and to consummate history in the telos. Christ was sent as prophesied to be—among many more offices—the Son of God, the Son-King, the Priest-King, the Messiah, as in Psalms 2; 72; 89; 110; 2 Samuel 7:4–28; Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 9:9, and the Suffering Servant as in Isaiah chapters 40 – 46. The second commission was that given by Christ; namely, to his people (*ecclesia*) to proclaim the gospel—the *kerugma*—to the ends of the earth, so that the commission of Genesis 1:26–30 should be fulfilled and the Divine redemption of the human race be known to the ends of the earth—'Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!' This proclamation was to be made through the *ecclesia*, Christ's Body, because through his incarnation the Son of God became Man and by his ministry, his death upon the cross, his burial and rising the third day, his ascending to the heavenly throne of his Father, being seated at His right hand and reigning with Him in all history, God-become-Man set up all the factors by which the community of faith, hope and love should be established in and for all creation.

From what we have said in this section we can see why the community of love—the *ecclesia*—has to be the body of Christ's people filled unto all the fullness of God. Indeed, in Ephesians 1:15–23 that is shown to be the case. Christ is given all power to head up the church since he is head over all things including the church 'which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all'. He is now filling the church with his own fullness for the ministry it is to effect in this last age up until the telos—'the completion of all things'—climaxes in 'the age to come'. Put in a slightly different manner it means that in this present age Christ is teaching the *ecclesia*, which is his Body, the truth and wisdom of God (Eph. 4:20–24), thus enabling them to witness to him for the salvation he gives (Acts 1:8) and for the manner of life which expresses the way of life this community must live.

Having seen, though ever so briefly, God's purpose for the community of faith, hope and love, we can give ourselves to the text of the New Testament to see the importance of what the early Christians called the Way' (Acts 24:14; cf. John 14:6; Matt. 7:13–14). How powerful are those principles of faith, hope and love! How indispensable they are to the way of life of the community of love! How they train us for the community of eternity! Even so it may be said these three virtues are not so much paradigms of Christ to be followed and sincerely imitated (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1) as

they are living in his Body, being members of him and thus of one another, and having his life lived out through us as he works the Father's plan to its wonderful fulfilment.

DRINKING THE FULLNESS OF THE RIVER OF GOD

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSING

In our looking at God's fullness we have touched a number of times on the fact that in creation God, at the beginning, intentionally supplied it with all that was needed, and is still necessary to its ultimate fulfilment. This is the matter of blessing. Its antithesis is cursing. In Genesis chapter one we have daily accounts of the goodness of God in what He created and the unveiling of His intentions for the creation. In 1:14–19 we see the provision for light and darkness, day and night by the creation of the sun and the moon. Verses 20–25 speak of the creation of creatures of the water and creatures of the land and sky. There is talk of swarms of fishes and flocks of birds. Especially interesting is God's blessing of them all. In this case 'blessing' means 'full provision', 'the power to fulfil what God has commanded'. Blessing is God's gift to enable fulfilling God's plan; for example, 1:22: 'And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth"'. Again, God created Man to be a blessing to the creation. It needed humanity to use God's gifts to help creation function properly. Humanity also needed God's aid to do His will in the midst of creation, as well as for creation. Genesis 1:26–31 tells us of God's purpose in creating Man and of provision for Man in carrying out God's commission:

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.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw every-thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Man's fullness was that he had been appointed for a task and given a share in the venture of God. He needed his creational fullness to have dominion (kingship) over all creation to share the will and plan of God. Religious mystics have as their aim to relate to God directly, without a mediator, so that they will know God intimately. This is in opposition to God's order for Himself and Man. It is also flying in the face of the results of the Fall. In one sense Man is a mediator for all creation since he has been made king over it as the reflection of God's Kingship (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:5–8), but God Himself is out to mediate the will and command of God for human creatures in that the Son has ever been the go-between between God and Man, the fact so evidently brought out in 1 Peter 1:18–20, Revelation 13:8, and Ephesians 1:3–10, cf. I Corinthians 2:6–10. It needed the fullness of Man from the fullness of God for Man to participate in the will and plan of God. We need to see, in particular, that we are

using the term 'Man' to cover all the human race. In Adam the whole human race should live and work in the fullness of God which is in them, their being in His image.

That Man of himself cannot supply his own fullness is evident. He must be one with God, in fellowship with Him and receive constant aid and constant supply of strength. The statement in Genesis 1:28, 'And God blessed them', means that He gave Man the means and power to be able to fulfil the task given to him in the commission. When we think of the gigantic task given to the human race to complete in fellowship with God, then we see the majesty as well as the simplicity of the venture. We are aware that the 'ancient serpent' had his own ambition and project in mind and have already noted that he was out to deceive the whole world which he was seeking to bring under his own control.

It is not said that the supply of the blessing in relation to the commission was withdrawn. It is certain that those who sought—and seek—to do God's will receive God's fullness. Likewise it is shown in Luke 24:50–52 that Christ blessed the apostles for the commission which was given to them before, and as, he ascended to the throne. Thus God's fullness is present wherever men and women seek to fulfil the creational commission and proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This has been the case throughout history. Certainly each seeker after God and believer in Him may personally desire God in all His fullness, for time and again he is exhorted to know God; but the fullness of God is present in him so that he may proclaim the God of grace, of love, of holiness, righteousness, goodness and truth. Also each believer relates personally to God through Christ, but then he is not an individual working as a monad but being ecclesial to his very core, being a member of the Body of Christ and so working in the fellowship of all members, being part of the temple of God, each a living stone bonded together with all others.

Some see God's cursing as a withdrawal of His blessing—simply that. Yet it is more. The earth is cursed on account of Adam (Gen. 3:17–19). Eve has a history-long form of punishment, and the serpent has doom pronounced upon him. The whole matter of blessing and cursing is opened to us in the Book of Deuteronomy chapters 28 to 30. Israel understood that God was giving them rest from Egypt and the blessing of a new Eden in Canaan. On this basis the new land was one of rich blessing. Even so it could also be the place of dire cursing were Israel to revert to idolatry and other forms of covenantal disobedience. Israel looked to Adam as its first father and Eve as its first mother, and considered the works of the flesh to be abhorred. Such works were idolatry—trust in other gods, idols and nations. God had given ordinances and statutes to protect the holiness of God and their new land, and the grace of covenant to preserve it in righteousness and holiness. It also had what we might call sacraments of God's grace in the worship system to renew it continually and restore its life as Yahweh's treasured possession. So Israel kept drinking at the River of God, at the 'Fountain of Living Waters'.² He was its only source of life.

THE RIVER OF LIVING WATER

This has much to do with our earlier chapters where we saw the emptiness of Man which came at the Fall. From drinking the sweetness of created life, from living in true innocence, from eating the fruit of the Garden and drinking of God's River, Man

² See my booklet *The River of God*. (NCPI. Blackwood, 2001). I have used some of the points in it to show how worshippers of God are tilled to satisfaction so that their cups run over with His goodness and mercy all the days of their life.

became empty, and doubtless with a raging thirst for what were God's substantial gifts and for which nothing could be a substitute. Man's dry wadies can never slake the deep thirst as does the River of God. Human reservoirs become cracked and parched or, as the writer of Proverbs puts it, 'Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked' (Prov. 25:26).

When Israel is under God's curse because of its apostasy and is nigh unto decimation by God's punishment or chastisement, then God speaks as 'the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer' for His holiness is dynamic for the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness' (Isa. 5:16). All the elements of His moral glory such as are seen in Exodus 34:6—7 and related statements come into view in His mercy, kindness, and faithfulness as He redeems the people and the land. As Psalm 65 says, 'The river of God is full of water'. Men now drink afresh from His marvellous supply:

Thou visitest the earth and waterest it,
thou greatly enrichest it;
the river of God is full of water;
thou providest their grain,
for so thou wast prepared it.
Thou waterest its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.
Thou crownest the year with thy bounty;
the tracks of thy chariot drip with fatness.
The pastures of the wilderness drip,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy (Ps. 65:9–13).

Psalm 46 speaks of the River of God: 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High'. When we look at Israel's desperate plight the Psalmist tells us:

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 (Ps. 46:5–7).

What, then, is this 'river of living water'; this 'river of God'; these 'rivers of living water'; these 'springs of living water', and this 'fountain of living waters'? These are phrases from all over the Scriptures. What do they mean? We begin at Jeremiah 2:11—13 (cf. Jer. 17:13):

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.

The term is explained when we look further down the chapter and read: And now what do you gain by going to Egypt, to drink the *waters* of the Nile? Or what do you gain by going to Assyria, to drink the *waters* of the Euphrates?' These waters are the

power of the nation, its life–blood. They might mean the cisterns’ which Israel has hewn for itself. In any case the waters represent the power of the idols. ‘Living waters’ technically means ‘water which is flowing and keeps fresh and sweet’ whereas reservoir water does not flow or move and so becomes stale and stagnant. The River of God in Psalm 46 is the flowing life of God. Jerusalem has no river other than God—‘the fountain of living waters’.

Most interesting is Proverbs 4:23: ‘Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life’. One has one’s own river, though doubtless for the faithful person it is the River of God overflowing into him both in the creational sense and in the wisdom and moral sense also. Another translation has ‘issues of life’ which would mean in its context, ‘truth and wisdom’. Man can, himself, flow forth that which flows into him. This is wonderful.

Again, in Proverbs 5:16–21—a somewhat difficult passage—the writer speaks of ‘flowing water from your own well’ which appears to mean ‘the wife of his youth’. As a flowing stream gives satisfaction so does a wife quench the thirst of the loving husband in the face of the other cracked cisterns such as women of the street. We find a somewhat reversed situation when Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well near the town of Sychar. This woman had had five husbands and now was living with a man not married to her. On the surface it would appear she had not been a satisfactory flowing stream to her men. Jesus told her, in essence, whilst she drank the water of this world she would thirst again, but if she would drink of the water Jesus offered her she would never thirst again! Indeed the water Jesus offered her would be ‘a spring of water welling up to everlasting life’!

THE WAY THIRSTING PEOPLE ARE FILLED

We are well on the way to coming to the conclusion of our being ‘Filled Unto all the Fullness of God’. God is the ‘fountain of living waters’. Water is the metaphor for life, and in this case His life. In creating all things God gave life to them. Genesis 1:26–30 shows us that in blessing Man God made him to be fruitful. Genesis 2:7 states: ‘then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being’. ‘Living being’ means a ‘creature’ and so one dependent upon God to continue living, that is, one needing to keep drinking of God. Man—the man and the woman—died on the day they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As described in Romans 1:19–26, those dead to God refused to believe on Him, to worship Him and they sought new sources of life, that is, the idols. They rejected the law of God and substituted the laws of the idols. Their refusal to keep God in their knowledge meant they purged themselves of God in favour of the new gods. Being emptied of God’ now:

They were filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them (Rom. 1:29–32).

As we have previously noted, that which is fully filled at creation cannot be emptied. Something must fill the emptiness. Fallen Man becomes the consumer of all kinds of things he designs to satisfy himself. However, such things cannot fill the fallen person with genuine life. Ultimately they prove to be the things of death. We have looked

at the Hebrew and Greek words which speak of ‘nothingness’, ‘vanity’, ‘futility’ and their synonyms. Ephesians 4:17–19 covers this way of living:

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds: they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart; they have become callous and have given themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of uncleanness.

Once, after I had preached on the division Man’s fall brought into this world in both its personal and cosmic effects, a woman approached me with a woebegone face and asked despairingly, ‘However can all these things be put together again?’ She may well have asked on that human level as we look at the history of the human race, especially as it is outlined in Romans 1:18–32 and the horrors of unbelievable dimensions it has committed. The answer to the woman’s question must be a multiple one. For example: ‘He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil’ (1 John 3:8). ‘For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised’ (2 Cor. 5:14–15). ‘For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him’ (John 3:17). ‘The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly’ (John 10:10). ‘Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind”’ (John 9:39). From these reasons given it can be seen that they all relate to a salvation goal, to the saving of people deemed to be lost by their rejection of God. As such they are substantial. The salvation of the human race is of gigantic importance. Even so, it is not just a bare salvation. The word ‘salvation’ is not limited only to the remission of the penalty for sins committed. It covers all to do with all elements of sin such as its pollution, its power and, eschatologically, its very presence. Salvation has the root idea of healing, as in ‘salve’. Healing is linked with regeneration of the sinner when we understand that God created us and in Adam we sought to de–create the creation by adherence to the God–substituting actions of idol–worship. Beyond such transmutation of creation, salvation purposes to transform us by re–creation, that is, by regeneration. Salvation thus includes all God does in making us His children, causing us to be filled with love, transforming us by the power of the gospel and the indwelling of us by the Holy Spirit. As we will see shortly, He is about making us who are saved to be His *am segullah*; His *laos periousios*; His own treasured possession; His *ecclesia* which can also be called His ‘Kingdom of Priests’; His powerful community to effect His will in all eternity. In fact His purpose in creating is to consummate His Kingdom in which we shall be kings and priests under God and inhabit what have come to be called ‘the new heaven’ and ‘the new earth’. All in that powerful future will be in the image of His Son and therefore totally in His image, having been sanctified, glorified and perfected.

So, having shown at least in part the plan of God we may now return to the fact that a sinner may come to drink of God, so that not only does the person come to salvation but out of his drinking of the River of God he also has a heart out of which will flow to the world ‘the issues of life’ (Prov. 4:23). The faithful have always known the outflow of God to them, the drinking of that outflow, and then sharing it with their fellow human creatures. To those who had not yet responded to him Jesus promised himself as the True Bread and the True Water. ‘Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of

life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). At this point he seemed to have no response, for his conditions were: ‘he who comes to me’ and ‘he who believes on me’.

He said much the same to the Samaritan woman at the well. Her response was eager enough: ‘The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw”’. At this point Jesus took the conversation to the fact and matter of her sin. Only when that was dealt with did the flow come as she raced back to her people to tell them: ‘Come see a man who told me all that I ever did’. Suddenly a spring erupted within her. John 7:37–39 is the passage which was virtually an announcement of the coming of Pentecost:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, ‘If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, “Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.”’ Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

To those whose reservoirs were dry, to those who, forsaking the ‘Fountain of living waters’, had a raging thirst, Jesus spoke these wonderful words; but note the conditions: (i) one had to know he was thirsty and needed the living water; (ii) one had to come to Christ; (iii) one had to drink of him; and (iv) one had to believe on him. Now the empty man could be filled, his thirst quenched and torrents of life-giving water could gush out of him to a dry and parched world.

THE MATTER OF TRUE FILLING BY GOD HIMSELF

We come now to the important matter of God taking up His dwelling within us, and so filling His people beyond all denial. To do this we first need to see that Christ as the incarnate Son makes the claim in John 10:30, ‘I and the Father are one’, and then goes on to speak of the works he does: ‘but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father’ (John 10:38). He later makes a similar statement:

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. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves (John 14:10—11).

Some verses later he adds: ‘In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you’ (John 14:20). Prior to being apprehended by his enemies from the temple, he prays what has been called his High-Priestly prayer:

I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me (John 17:20—23).

In these five quotations above we see that the Father and the Son indwell one another. The Holy Spirit obviously indwells both Father and Son since he is called the Spirit of your Father’ (Matt. 10:20; cf. Gal. 4:4–7; Rom. 8:14–17; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), and ‘the Spirit of the Son’, (Gal. 4:4–7; cf. Rom. 8:14–17). His intimacy

The cross, the death and burial, the rising again, and the ascension which were suffering vicariously—i.e. on our behalf—will seen also to be indispensable to our being born again, i.e. begotten from on high. This leads us to contemplate the passages of Ephesians 4:17–32 and Colossians 3:1–25.

In the Ephesian passage Paul is saying that they did not learn from Christ to live after the manner of Gentiles. That life of darkness and immorality was never recommended. What they learned regarding Christ was that they were to put off (*apothesai*) the old humanity and its corruption and to put on [*endusasthai*] the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (RSV).³ The believers were taught two actions: (i) to put off what is of the old humanity; and (ii) to put on what is of the new humanity. That means that the new person should be put on and the life of that new person should flow, transformation happening in the act of living out that person. It surely has reference to the Adam who failed ('put off') and the New Person, the new Adam ('put on').

The Colossians passage (3:1–25) is surely linked with the Ephesians passage. Verses 9 to 11 need to be read with Ephesians 4:22–24:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature [humanity] with its practices and have put on the new nature [humanity], which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.

Here Paul is saying that the new nature 'is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator'. Here *renewed* has to do with new birth, restoration, new creation. Man who was in the image of his creator (God) is now being recreated in that image, and the image before them is really Christ. In Galatians 3:27 Paul says, 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ'. Both references are to do with 'all one in Christ Jesus', hence Galatians 3:28 says, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

Now we can gather together our thoughts, and they are these, 'The fallen Man, the sinner, has reversed the image in his actions so that what was true of that image has been for the most part defaced or destroyed. It may even said to be operated in reverse—i.e. composed of "self acts" such as self-love, "self righteousness"—and so on. Because the image is foundational to being truly human, i.e. is ontological, then God has determined to renew Man, even unto resuming his role of being in the image of God. For this to happen God sent His Son into the world to do that which would be the basis of His salvation and so of new birth. Sin and evil being what they are, then only what God had planned could be successful.' Whilst we could spend a whole paper examining this extraordinary happening, its act and its meaning, yet the biblical presentations of God's way of redeeming Man are convincing and lead us to believe that what God does as Father, Shepherd, Redeemer and King can indeed bring Man to pardon for his sins, justification by grace, and the stunning experience of new birth. God creates, Satan decreates, and then, through Christ and the Spirit He recreates.

It is fitting then that we come to the point to which Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:1–2. He has been telling his readers of the mercies of God in eleven chapters of wholesome doctrine and seems deeply moved himself. So he says:

³ Andrew 'F. Lincoln in *The Word Commentary*, vol. 42, *Ephesians* (Word. Waco, 1990), p. 287 translates verse 24. and that you should put on the new person who is created in Gods likeness in the righteousness and holiness which comes from the truth'.

people. In Israel God dwelled with His people in the sanctuary of the temple, and so they were corporately filled with Him. In the New Testament the *ecclesia* is God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16; cf. Eph. 2:20–22) and as all are bonded together as living stones (cf. 1 Pet. 2:4–5) so 'the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord'—'a dwelling place of God in the Spirit'.

All of this tells us that we are filled unto all the fullness of God by the Father, the Son and the Spirit coming to dwell in us. The River of Living Water is God Himself in His 'three-person'd being'. The idea of Divine-human interdwelling is stunning and, for most people, unbelievable; that is, that God should dwell in a person and that the person should dwell in Him, and that a whole community should dwell in God and He in them. The implications of this for the life of the love-community are amazing beyond computing. It reminds us of our key passage of Ephesians 3:14–19, and especially of the phrase 'together with all saints', for our being filled unto all God's fullness is not only personal for each of us but corporate in the whole body.⁴

CONCLUSION: THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE LOVE OF CHRIST AND THE FULLNESS OF GOD AND MAN

Our joyful task now is to comprehend together as all saints the love of Christ whose dimensions are beyond computing, and to know that unsurpassable love so that its outcome will be our being filled unto all God's fullness. All of this has to be in the context of God's Fatherhood by which every family is named, by Christ's indwelling by our faith, and the Spirit's strengthening. The Father tells us of the Son, for he alone knows that Sonship (e.g. Matt. 11:27). The Son tells us of the Father and His Fatherly love (e.g. John 14:6). The Spirit fills us with the love of God which has come to us through Christ's love (Rom. 5:5). Christ living in us (Gal. 2:20) continually loves us (e.g. Rev. 1:5b) as he rules all the universe (Eph. 1:19–22).

BEING FILLED—IN ACTION

There are so many ways in which the coming and baptising of the Spirit is described in the New Testament, all of which, in one way or another, point to the filling of the recipient or recipients being filled with the Spirit. These will help us to see it is by the Spirit that the action happens:

At Samaria, the new believers had not received the Spirit, 'for it had not yet *fallen* on any of them'. The apostles laid hands on them 'and they *received* the Holy Spirit'. It was something which could be *seen*: 'Simon *saw* that the Holy Spirit was *given* through the laying on of the apostles' hands ...' *At Caesarea*, 'the Holy Spirit *fell* on all who heard the word'; 'the gift of the Spirit *had been poured out...on* the Gentiles' and '... the Holy Spirit *fell on them* just as on us at the beginning [Pentecost]'. Later, Peter described it as giving 'the same *gift* to them as he gave to us'. To Paul, it was said simply, '... you may...be *filled* with the Holy Spirit'. In the Epistles are found these descriptions: '... the Holy Spirit who *was given* to us'; '... *given* us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee': '... *receive* the Spirit...by the hearing of faith'; '... might *receive* the promise of the Spirit through faith'. Peter speaks of '... the Holy Spirit sent from heaven'. Again, Paul speaks of '... the Holy Spirit who dwells within us', and says in the same vein, '... the

⁴ We have omitted to take up the further matters of us being 'in the Father', 'in the Son' and 'in the Holy Spirit', of union with Christ and being led by the Spirit. There is simply little space to encompass all these wonderful things. We will seek in our Conclusion to point to these wonderful elements under the heading of 'Being Filled— --in Action'.

Spirit of God dwells in you', adding, 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him'. His meaning in these three statements is that believers have received the Holy Spirit. Indeed, many more of his references to the action of the Spirit in the believer likewise pre-suppose possession of the Spirit. He says clearly, '... God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts ...' John says, And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us', and 'By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit'. He also speaks of believers having been 'anointed by the Holy One', and adds, 'the anointing which you have received from him abides in you'. This anointing is undoubtedly that of the Holy Spirit.⁵

There are many things we could add to this description of being filled. For example, we could show that many who were filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost were later tilled again as described in the account of Acts 4:23—31. Peter was one who was at Pentecost and yet in Acts 4:8 is spoken of as being filled with the Holy Spirit as though by a special impartation at that point. Likewise Paul who was filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism is said to have such an impartation as he faced Elymas the magician (Acts 13:6—12). We can conclude that this fullness is linked with the life of obedience and continuing faithfulness. In Galatians 3:1—5 Paul shows that it is possible to begin with the Spirit and yet end with the flesh. It is proper to begin with the Spirit and not end with the flesh. Seeing these actions related to being filled with the Spirit and by the Spirit, we now return to the conclusion of Man in his innocence, in the state of fallenness, and then in the regenerating action of God. We have spent much time in our studies in seeing the wonder of Man's state of innocence and how noble a creature God has made him to be in order to rule the whole world and to Edenise it out to its limits. We then saw how dreadful his condition became when he fell from his innocent state to one of depravity; from fullness of life and became empty, vain, self-operating, even to the point of evil, hardness and homicide. We have to look continually at the life we had without God and with the idols. Spiritual disintegration and loss of true purpose brought us into much suffering as we were the playthings of Satan and his evil powers. Seeing what we were created to be, the fall from all that and into all emptiness, makes us see Christ's love in redeeming us. For example, if we read Paul's teaching of the gospel in Romans 1:16 — 3:26, and the other mercies of God described in Romans 3:27 — 16:27 we can see Christ's love. John, Peter and the writer of Hebrews each has his way of communicating the gospel so that we see Christ's love. What vast dimensions of love has Christ suffered to liberate us from our enemies, and give us eternal life. Daily as Christ works in our lives through the Holy Spirit we know him as our Saviour and Lord; as our High Priest and then as our Intercessor; our Warrior-Lord in the daily battle against evil forces; as our Elder Brother, for we are the children God has given him. Undoubtedly Christ deals with us continually and in varying ways of his love. The great Revelator of Christ's love is the Holy Spirit. He is able to relate to all creation because he was, with the Father and the Son, a co-creator:

When thou hidest thy face, they are dismayed;
when thou takest away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.
When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;
and thou renewest the face of the ground (Ps. 104:29, 30).

⁵ This quote is from *The Day of the Spirit* by G. Bingham (NCPI, Blackwood, 1985), p. 158. I have not given the references for the various texts but they are set out appropriately in the book. Also I have not included the terms used in Acts 19:1—7, the account of twelve disciples Paul found at Ephesus and upon whom the Spirit came when Paul laid hands on them

The Holy Spirit was with Christ as he was the Word, as he ministered in ancient times and as he was incarnated. That qualified him to do what Christ told his disciples he would do as the group talked in the upper room at the time of the Covenant Supper. He said the Spirit would bring to their remembrance all he had said and done in his years of ministry. He would teach them 'all things'. He would bear witness to the truth of Christ, and cause the disciples to do likewise. He would lead them into all the truth, would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and at the same time glorify both Christ and the Father.⁶

It was necessary, then, that Pentecost should come as predicted in his word so that his followers should be tilled to all fullness, whether we call that fullness 'the fullness of the Spirit', 'the fullness of Christ' or the 'fullness of the Father', for it would have to be the fullness of the whole Godhead. When, then, the Spirit came at Pentecost, all were tilled with the Spirit and they received the ministry of the Spirit to themselves as Jesus had told them would happen, and living water—the River of God—immediately flowed in torrents to Israel and beyond. As Jesus had said it would be, the waters flowed out to Jerusalem and all Judea, Samaria and then the ends of the earth. Down through two thousand years this filling ministry of the Holy Spirit has proceeded and in this book we are speaking about that action.

So we come to Christ and are recreated. So as we live in faith and obedience we drink of Christ, receiving and giving, giving and receiving. We do not covet God's fullness as some kind of faith-luxury or spiritual elitism. We know the battle we live in as Satan and his minions still seek to deceive us and the nations. The weapons of our warfare may appear to be simple and even totally ineffective, but throughout the world they have been effective to the pulling down of many strongholds of evil. We can overcome this evil one by faith and humility, cause him to flee, and disperse him and his accusations by the blood of the Lamb', 'the sword of the Spirit', 'the word of their [our] testimony, and by 'not loving their [our] lives unto death'.

We conclude, then, that God would have us filled 'unto all His fullness'. This is what the writers of the New Testament would have us do. It is possible for us to begin in the Spirit and then go on in the flesh and even to end in the flesh (Gal. 3:1-3). It is possible for us to begin in the liberty of the Spirit and to recede to spiritual infantilism (I Cor. 3:1), to be saved by grace and yet 'accept the grace of God in vain' (2 Cor. 6:1-2; cf. Gal. 5:1-4), to be alert to the gospel of salvation and then to become dull and sluggish because we do not press on in the mystery of Christ our Melchizedek (Heb. 5:11-14). The Epistle to the Ephesians has the grand theme of the people of God from beginning to end, and although it is tempting to present it here, yet we must resist the impulse to do so. It is sufficient to say that the section of Ephesians 3:14-20 we have chosen with its goal of fullness in view, as such, is not pursued for its own delight, but for the wonder of having 'the whole spiritual blessing of God' (Eph. 1:3); that is, all things pertaining to life and godliness', so that by these things we might 'become partakers of the divine nature'. How then we need to be filled unto all the fullness of God!

⁶ John 14:25-26: 15:26-27: 16:7-15: 20:22-23: cf. Acts 1:8.