

about the book...

In what we might call the psychological age, mankind is seeking to know itself as the human race. Individually man is also seeking to know himself, as a person.

The human race is confronted by acceleration in technology, the rapidly changing electronic media, and the continuous rise and fall of governments. It is a time of rapid changes in economics and social living. Can man find, let alone keep his identity when the old landmarks are so rapidly swept away?

What anyway is a personal identity? This book seeks to give answers to some of these questions. Man's identity consists in those things with which he is identified by his own will. In Biblical terms his identity is given him by God who creates every man as a unique person. Man can go against this identity and suffer as a consequence or he can accept it and develop richly. To do this he must keep his integrity against the adverse tides which flow about him.....

This can be called a thoughtful book. It is, nonetheless, exciting. It may well help a man to discover his true identity.

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**DISCOVERING
YOUR IDENTITY**

GEOFFREY BINGHAM

DISCOVERING YOUR IDENTITY

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PROLOGUE

Search for Identity

A book was written some years ago called *Men Without Faces*. A poet wrote under the title, *The Wasteland*. The themes speak of the unreality man knows as he pursues life. For some time now we have been speaking of ‘the post-Christian era’, as though Christianity were now effete, and men have decided against the fact of the Gospel. The current rebellion against modern civilisation, and the opting for alternate lifestyles tell us that man – at least in part – is glad to be rid of the old landmarks. He seeks an unchartered course. Ideologies are espoused in one generation, only to be rejected by the next.

We can now speak of ‘modern man’. This is not new of course, but ‘modern man’ seems to be different from the older generations. He has a new and passionate world about him. If the old landmarks have been erased – many of them, anyway – then there are new and different landmarks. Old Babel and its tower is superseded by the shiny new towers. The old shrines of Babel have given way to the ‘new temples, and these on a magnificent scale. Technology has increased beyond the dreams even of science-fiction writers. A new world has come.

Yet it is no less ghastly. Wars have not decreased. Hunger and poverty are still rife. Standards of morality have not improved. Behind great movements for social betterment lie personal aims and designs. *Corruption* attends the plans for man’s betterment.

Dread grows in the international scene as nuclear weapons proliferate, and those who oppose this impending violence oppose it with dreadful violence of their own.

Alvin Toffler’s book *Future Shock* reasonably predicts a world of change beyond even our current radical changefulness. The movements of population within nations, the radical changes within societies, and the demands for rapid adaptation to change seem to be beyond the ability of man to cope. Already mental illnesses are on the increase. Suicide has accelerated. High density living inevitably brings intolerable tension, violence, and death.

How then can man cope with his current world? Is he so resilient that nothing will worry him? The facts are that changes in culture, the equalising of opportunities for both sexes, the erasing of the old landmarks, and the instability of the new all take their toll on the human spirit. For the anarchists and their kin these are great days. With the savage tearing down of the old structures – and even the new structures – there is the promise of hope. When the old has been destroyed the new will come. That is a kind of faith, and for the most part – to most of us – a horrific hope, if ‘hope’ can be the correct word. This lethal action of passionate men and women confounds confusion.

Add to this the loss of faith in the world, and the picture becomes even more complete. The Bible knows no ‘modern man’. Man has seen himself as modern in every one of his generations. The Bible sees man made in the image of God, but horribly fallen, and totally depraved. The image has not been lost but it has gone into reverse. Man is perverse. He is also disoriented. He is a dislocated creature out of focus with God, creation, and himself. He is a lost soul. He has death where once he had life.

The merry patterns of his living are a pathetic attempt on his part to insist that he can manage his own affairs. Wise Jeremiah said bluntly that, ‘The

way of a man is not in himself. It is not in man to direct his own footsteps.' Man's incipient humanism claims that man can handle the universe. He can find his own answers. Well, he has been about it a long time, and seems no nearer but indeed farther away than ever from success. The anger in men's hearts grows as disillusionment and shock set in. So often this violence breaks out in revolutions, wars, genocides and the like. More domestically it is seen in the tensions within families, the increase of marital infidelity, the derangements of familial groups, the violence within society in muggings, rapes, sadism and the like. None of these things we state are overstatements. Man sees but the tip of his own iceberg of anger and violence. Commonsense tells the social activist that there is plenty in all the world for all people, yet the distribution is fearfully amiss. He watches the exploitation that goes on about him, and his anger grows through frustration. Ideologies abound, and the material of conflict increases, but anti-violence violence can only increase universal violence. Everywhere it is 'Catch-22'.

How then does man cope? How does he adapt? In some cases he can opt out – as far as is humanly and circumstantially possible – from what he calls 'the rat-race'. He can go to a secluded spot. He can set up a simple style of living. He can – if possible – raise a family in that life-style, but even this simple desire is fraught with problems and even dangers. The children who are raised do not all espouse the simplicity of their parents. The matter becomes quite complicated. It is difficult to opt out of modern society, no matter how hard one may try.

Doubtless man must try every expedient he can to retain his dignity and his identity. It will not be a simple work. If position, circumstances, and a certain amount of wealth favour him to a great degree, then he is most fortunate. Not all can follow him in his self-saying exercises. Even then he is faced with the larger issues of what the old theologians called 'the

eternities'. That is he must find his answers in the light of eternity and the question of immortality. Otherwise his satisfaction in life is still far from complete. He must orientate himself to something other than, and beyond, himself.

However, what of the mass of humanity? How lonely human beings are in their living. They are even lonely in marriage, and in the roles of parent and-child, brother and brother. A Biblical prophet once depicted a self-willed king as 'a chip on the ocean', the waves tossing this lone and helpless entity, and he all the more pathetic because of the imagined powers and position of royalty. Everywhere individual man is as a chip on the ocean. In so many ways man is flotsam and jetsam. He often sees himself as this, and is angry with what he calls implacable and alien fate.

No wonder, then, that man – modern man – is seeking desperately for identity. Since he has loosed himself from his old moorings, and because the old landmarks have been erased for the most part, he finds it difficult to establish an identity. On the very simple level of new housing estates we know that it is difficult to rapidly establish the experience and principle of 'community'. On the simplest level – that of the 'nuclear family' – community is not easy to establish. When it comes to personal friendship very few can claim authentically to have special and trustworthy friendships. The search for identity then is not an easy one.

We must accept the fact that man is a most determined creature. He is quite resilient. He sets about healing himself, and establishing himself, even in the most disturbed conditions. In this he is to be admired. Currently his sociological researches are a source of encouragement. In fact the army of sociologists and welfare workers has swollen beyond belief. Even so it cannot cope with the demands being made upon it. With the rapid accumulation of psychological knowledge and psychiatric know-how, not too much

progress has been made. This is the point that anti-psychiatry is trying to make.

How then shall modern man find his identity? That is the problem we are giving ourselves to in this book. The answers being given are simple ones, and because of that may be mistaken for simplistic ones. It is that man has been created with an affinity for God, creation, and his fellow man. In this is his true identity. Also God has given every man the gift of uniqueness. He is his special person, albeit in the context of other persons who also have the gift of uniqueness. Man does not have to consciously discover what is his uniqueness, but in the relationship which he has with God, the creation, and his fellowman he can work it out in the practices of life. That is man is a creature of vocation, but then special vocation. When he does not have to search for identity he can live in identity – his own identity. The very unconsciousness of it all is his true and satisfying delight.

To substantiate this premise is the aim of this book. We must keep reiterating the truth that heredity, environment, and circumstances do not determine what a person will be. He is what he is prior to these factors. They will only determine what he will be according to his reaction or response to them. James Denney once said that heredity 'fixes not our fate but our trial'. If we apply this principle to environmental and circumstantial influences as well we can see that man decides within himself what will be his responses. They in turn may then make or break him. We say then that man can face the most terrible situations especially if he is a person of faith – and emerge even the better for 'the testings. In fact these things may well be the elements which help to etch and develop this unique person which he is.

Let us then look at the problems man faces, especially as he is a fallen creature, and let us see the measure of grace which can liberate and mature him into his full personhood.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Subject

'Who am I?' is the question often asked. Today, it seems, it is increasingly asked. The disciplines of psychology, psychiatry and psychotherapy have made man generally self-conscious. He seeks out to know more and more what a man is. He does this primarily by studying the phenomenology of man known as anthropology. That is, he basically starts from man to discover what a man is.

This is certainly one method to be tried. The Biblical scheme, however, is somewhat different. It starts from God ." It follows this order:- First understand Who God is. Then, because man is made in His image, you will discover who man is. In other words, theology precedes anthropology. Put simply it is this :- 'Know God and you will know man.' Simplistic as this is it is the Biblical way of knowing man, and there is no other way.

Nor is this method really simple, since man has sinned against God, and is not anxious to know too much about Him, and certainly not anxious to relationally know Him, seeing this would involve high moral demands, and would require the total commitment of love. That is to say the Fall or rebellion of man is a powerful impediment to man coming to know God.

We also know that God has communicated Himself through many media in order to let us know Him. The media such as the Scriptures, the order and functions of creation, angels, prophets, dreams and

visions, the acts of God in history, and especially the incarnation of His Son have all been such as to give man understanding of God were he willing to receive it. He does not easily receive it, for the Scriptures say, time and again, that no one knows God (i.e. understands Him), and no one seeks after Him. This categorical statement stands along with other statements which declare that man basically hates God, and is His implacable enemy.

If we add to this list the fact that evil powers seek to blind man to the true nature of God, then we can see how difficult it is for a man to know God, and so come to know himself.

The Search for Identity

Books relating to discovering self-identity are good sellers for the most part. Man is deeply interested in man. This has both a good and bad side. The good side is that man is in fact quite an amazing creature, whether good or evil. There is every reason to discover what man is in principle, and also what one is in personal identity. The bad side is an over-preoccupation with man to the detriment of God and the creation about us. It is bad when one is obsessed with his own unique personhood. The less conscious one is of oneself, it seems, the more one is really oneself. This does not put self-examination and introspection wholly out of place, but it suggests that self-exploration can be a conceit.

At the same time self-searching, or seeking for identity may not necessarily be a bad thing. In fact it may be forced upon any one of us. Circumstances of life can bring bewilderment. Boredom with an unsatisfying job, or the loss of a sense of vocation may make us wonder what we are about. The pressures of life in business, family, and community may demand that we draw aside and ponder our lives. We all need time to work some of these things out so that we know

where we stand.

There may be yet more reasons. Human beings for the most part suffer from a sense of inferiority, and from another sense of being unfulfilled. They also sense they have accomplished little. They feel limited in capacity, drive and ability. This fosters the sense of inferiority. It is common amongst us to feel guilty. We wonder what we are, and what we are about. We think then, that to discover one's identity will help in making an assessment of what we are, what we are doing, and where we are going. With the influence of these elements it is no wonder we try to discover our identities.

Even so such a search may prove abortive. We may be seeking to discover our excellencies in order to boost our sense of self-worth. The journal Christianity Today has a cartoon depicting a counsellor in a clergyman's study. He is saying, dolefully, 'Then I got in touch with myself through meditation and discovered I'm not worth knowing.' It is obvious that one's motivation, reasons and methods of self-discovery may determine the kind of conclusion we will come to. In other words, can we really discover our identities? Given the problems of objectivity and subjectivity can any human person 'really discover himself, and if so would he be competent to handle the end result ?

The Quest Before Us

A sensible way of approaching our subject – given that we wish it to be Biblical – would be for us to discover the nature of God, and so, the nature of man. This general picture of man need not be abstract.

God is very concrete, in fact. He is both actional and practical. His unseeness need not baffle us. Unseeness does not mean unreality. Reality is not merely to be equated with materiality. Having discovered much of the nature of God we

can then proceed to the nature of man in general, i.e. in principle. Following that we can proceed to that self-examination which will show us our uniqueness, i.e. the gifts, capacities and talents God has given us, and of which we are constituted. We proceed, of course, on the assumption that each person is unique. We do not really have to evaluate man or any person on those values which humans may hold in any given culture or society. We would need to apply Biblical evaluations.

CHAPTER TWO

Knowing the Nature of God

Doubtless this is a tall order. Also it is a demanding one. Any reasonable systematic theology would give us a sufficient description of God and acquaint us with His attributes and characteristics, as we like to call them. Such a study would be valuable and fruitful. Likewise a thoughtful reading of the Scriptures would tell us much. All of this would need to be done with an open mind. Even so it is doubtful whether we would come to know God authentically by such methods. *Knowledge of God is primarily a relational thing.* That is God is Personal and we are also personal, and need to know Him within the context of a relationship. In human affairs we can learn much *about* other persons, but we can only *know* them by relating to them. We might make wrong assumptions through our knowledge of: them, but knowing them directly would give us genuine knowledge.

Impediments to Knowing God

We have already suggested some of these. Man's knowledge of God was originally one in innocence. That is he related to God directly, without guilt.

This was because he had accepted God as He was (is). Doubtless the essence of a true relationship is innocence, i.e. unquestioning acceptance of the other. The serenity, the joy, and the unconscious pleasure of all this gives true knowledge. Nor for the most part would such knowledge be in conscious consciousness.

The male and female as depicted in the first few chapters of Genesis lived in knowledge of each other. 'She is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone,' was the excited cry of the male. That is why their union was called, 'One flesh'. Also they lived in a rich purposiveness. The command to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill up the earth, subduing it, and having dominion over it gave them both vocation and goal. These two elements are necessary to a full life. All of this tells us what the imago of God can truly be. Man in relationship with God is to work out in creation what God has already planned. He is to work with Him.

Another way of salting this is that man had his identity and unconsciously (we assume) knew it, because *his identity was in relating to (a) God, (b) his creation, (c) his fellow creature, and (d) himself*. This must always be the way identity is. The fact that man and woman are different does not mean the difference threatens identity. In fact, within the image of God *it establishes it*. What then do we mean by 'Within the image?' We mean that when God said, 'Let us make man in our own image', '...in His image made He him, male and female made He them,' that the full image must be the *combination* of male and female elements. This is underlined by the saying, 'That which God has joined let no man put asunder,' not, 'Those whom God has joined...'. Male-female is essential for the full imago. If it be argued from I Corinthians 11 that woman is the *glory* of man (which she is) then it must not be argued that she is the *image* of man (which she is not). Genesis 5:2 says, 'Male and female He created them and named *them* Man when they were created.' Man's identity then is in the male-female relationship as it is also in the God-man relationship.

The impediment to knowing God comes when man seeks to be *other than what he essentially is*. That is he wishes to become as God. He refuses his innate created state of dependency relationship. This state

(or states) is son-Father, creature-Creator, and subject-King (servant-Master). Man must refuse to know the offices of God as Father, as Creator, as King, as also his own offices as son, creature and subject. In his sinfulness he imagines these are states of constriction and confinement, when in fact they are the very antitheses of such.

Nor is this the end. Man's identity is in his relationship to all of creation. To reject the Creator, must be to change the nature and order (and functions) of creation. Hence man in his sinfulness constantly presses back the means of his own identity. In the same manner he cannot fully relate to another human creature, whether male or female. Hence his identity cannot be full, and must always remain threatened. Finally he cannot relate to himself. Hence there are formidable barriers against ever knowing his true identity.

The Constant Barriers to Identity Discovery

Man does not live in a moral vacuum, a moral demilitarised zone, or a moral neutrality. He cannot be neutral. He is caught in the complexities of his own guilt, and the brokenness of his relationships. His inner emotional needs, by nature of the case, cannot be fulfilled, only made worse. Yet worse is to come. On the Biblical analysis man was tempted by evil, namely the Devil. This Devil or Satan heads up hosts of evil who are seeking to keep man from God. These powers are working in many ways, and particularly by manipulating the moral law, thus inducing sin, and thereby increasing that guilt which makes man's hatred of God compound itself.

We reiterate the principle that we know man only by knowing God. Hence the impossibility of knowing man, i.e. of truly knowing him. Many Scripture passages speak of man's hatred of God, and his practising enmity. They also insist that Scripture is the

revelation of those truths which man by reason of his personal bias can never know by his natural reasoning. The Scripture itself must be revealed by the Holy Spirit. Otherwise man will never see God.

The Need of Knowing Man as Created

Man fails into the trap of thinking he knows what a man is. He claims that a scientific phenomenology of man will be a true anthropology. ¹ This is not Romans 1:18–32 tells us that man's rejection of God set him upon wrong paths and that many of his cultural, sociological and moral patterns may well be wrong. In fact that is exactly what one would expect to find from the Biblical analysis.

Even those who accept Biblical truth work from the premise that man is as we see him. We must say that man is as we see him resulting from the Fall. Hence the true paradigm of man is not fallen man but Christ the True Man. It means we must research from the Scriptures, the nature of unfallen man. Even then we must remember as created man was not complete in the sense that he was destined, one day, to reach glorification. He was always man-going-somewhere, although he had not, as yet, gone anywhere:

It is not the purpose of this volume to trace (as far as is possible) the nature of created man, but Scriptures such as Genesis 1:26–31, 2:18ff, Psalm 8:3ff, I Corinthians 11, Ecclesiastes 3:11, 7:29 amongst many others – show us that man was an upright, moral and spiritual creature, having affinity with God, having function, goal and purpose, and being in essence a relational creature. Elements of guilt, fear, constriction, slavery of will and the like

were not known. He was, as created, free man, although, at the same time, man-in-probation.

He was a creature of glory, a creature of rich relationships and of positive action. There was no question of his having low self-esteem. Nor for that matter would he have been occupied with such questions. The truth is that he was not in rivalry with God, any person, or any thing. His was the unconsciousness of innocence, because his was the consciousness that all things were 'very good'. Only his capitulation to the temptation of evil changed all that.

¹ Note the Biblical passages which correct a false anthropology, a false cosmology, and a false theology are *revelational*. Cf. Acts 14:15–17, 17:24–28. They are not 'natural' theology.

CHAPTER THREE

Man and the Loss of Identity

We say that man's identity consists in (a) his relationship with God, creation, other humans and himself, and (b) in the particular gifts, manners, characteristics, mores and elements which go to make him what he is. Doubtless his development of these and his powers of habituation in a life-style, and a mindset all fix him, so to speak, in what he is, but basically *his identity is a given thing*.

When then he *destroys his true* relationship with God, creation, his fellow creature and himself, he is in a sorry plight. His state is a sad one. We are of course speaking of the truly normative. Man who has lost his identity will not necessarily think he has. He will accept his current view as his own status quo. He may feel the tremors of guilt, unhappiness, distress, but he will consider these are part of the order of things as they always *are*, which of course is not true in the creational sense. Thus he will suffer from malfunctional, dysfunctional and dislocated orders. He will be essentially disoriented. The sources of his identity will not be available. He must, necessarily, draw upon other resources.

If, in his scientific disciplines, he seeks to establish a true anthropology, and to correct his seeming aberrations in behaviour, he will find himself up against formidable factors. These lie both within himself, and within the creation. Given that unredeemed man has some moral sense (which he has), he will find himself in the dilemma Paul sets forth in Romans 7, where he does not do the things he would, but does

the (evil) things he would not do. Even worse than Paul, he does not delight in the law of God but rather rebels against it. He will find himself morally helpless.

In short, man has lost his true identity and is thus driven to establish some kind of an identity. If he is humanistic he will work from the presupposition that within man lie all the powers required to be man, and to accomplish what man is mostly about. If he has the experience Paul had then he will find he is weak morally, unable to accomplish anything. He will discover that he is ungodly (i.e. irreligious) and that he is a sinner. The elements he discovers give him an evil or weak identity. This he cannot accept unless he has been driven to a place of repentance.

The Hope of Identity

Does man have a total amnesia? Has he wholly forgotten what God made him to be, and the goal God has set before him? This is hardly likely. From the early chapters of Genesis we see that man is aware of the creational mandate, i.e. the command to be fruitful, multiply and replenish the earth, subduing it, and having lordship over it.

Is Man's Situation Without Hope?

Is man caught in an iron cage? Is he unable to escape from himself and his wrong ways? Does he have the will-power to change himself, and react differently to the stimuli of his genes, his circumstances, his relational catches, and his environment? Is he the victim of these?

Biblically he is far from being without hope. The God the Bible portrays is the God of hope. Beginning with Genesis 3:15 where man is promised that evil will be crushed by a human being who is coming, and proceeding

through the whole prophetic body of teaching, God is shown to be the God of hope. He is also shown to be the God of love, indeed that He is love. Also He is the God who gives the gift of faith, but then none of these gifts has to be exercised apart from the promises He makes to fallen humanity. He promised them a way out of their dilemma. This is first seen in His giving of the promise of covenant, that is his making of a universal covenant with Abraham. He promises He will bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham.

Without going into the whole matter of (Biblical) salvation history, it can be seen that man does not have to despair that he is shut up in any cage of fatalistic despair. Far from it, Another way of saying this is that man's hope is as good as God's promises. That is if God has made promises. The Scriptures call Him 'the God of hope' (Rom 15:13). This is because (a) He has given promises, and (b) because He is true. He is righteous: He will fulfil what He has promised. What is more, His Son is the expression of those promises. They reside in him. He is there to fulfil them. For this fact see II Corinthians 1: 19–20.

However all this will be nonsense to the so-called commonsense man. These thoughts, for him, are in some far-away airy-fairy realm; a cuckoo cloud realm, in fact. Nevertheless where does his hope lie apart from God? In what does it lie? Marxism supposes it to lie in some inevitable outworking of materialism, dialectical materialism in fact, but even here it cannot be proven. It is also a matter of faith and hope, though without revealed and explicit promises.

Man in His Loss of Identity

From the Biblical point of view man is lost. He has lost his way in his creation. He is lost from God. As we have said, he works hard to establish something

of an identity. Later we will discuss these ways. However the fact is that functionally he is unable to find his way himself. What do we mean by such a statement ?

We mean what Jeremiah (10: 23) says, 'The way of a man is not himself. It is not in a man to direct his own footsteps.' There are similar statements in the Book of Proverbs. Chapter 20, verse 24 of that book says, 'A man's steps are ordered by the Lord: how then can man understand his way?' There are other statements of similar nature, eg. 'A man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his footsteps.' 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes.' 'There is a way which seems right to man, but the end of it is death.'

This must mean that man is a contingent creature, that is he is only truly man when he lives in a state of dependence, and that dependence primarily must be upon God. 'The way of a man is not in himself,' is a thought-provoking statement. It spells doom to humanistic optimism, and indeed to humanism. Man of course becomes angry when his way does not work out, 'When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.'

If we think back to what 'we have said, it is that man cannot be an autonomous entity. He cannot live truly in himself or of himself. He may endeavour to live by himself, but he is innately and essentially a dependent creature. For this reason he will develop ways and means of creating his own identity.

CHAPTER FOUR

Man and the Two Aeons

Although God is Creator, Father and King, man has ignored these categories, seeking to establish his own. This is difficult since it is said, 'In Him we live, and move and have our being' (Acts 17: 28). Even though we ignore God, we are still dependent upon Him. Much of our so-called autonomy then simply is not the truth. Man is under a strain, ignoring his innate dependence, or pretending it is not there.

At the same time man is said to have died to God. This is primarily a relational death. In dying to God he has, so to speak, come alive to himself. He seeks to live in himself. Even so this cannot fully obtain. He cannot live to anyone but himself. In fact he lives to Satan, whether he finds this statement palatable or not. I John 5:19 says, 'The whole world lies in the Evil One.' John uses the term world or *kosmos* (Gk.), whilst Paul, although using *kosmos*, uses the parallel aeon, which can mean world or system or age, period or pattern. Paul says, 'We are those upon whom the ends of the ages (aeons) have come.'

John and Paul mean that fallen man is under the rule of the world system, which is headed up by Satan and his hosts which are for the most part fallen (rebellious) angels. This system is inhabited by those who have rebelled against God, whether they be angelic, supernatural or human creatures. As such they do not find their identity in God, but in the evil powers. Whilst it is true that the way of a man is not in himself, Satan and his powers delude man, so that

the way which seems right to him leads to death. Ephesians 2:2 speaks of 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now energises within (works in) the children of disobedience'. This is the opposite of Philippians 2:13 where it is said, '.... God is at work in (energises within) you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.'

In practice this means that man has established an identity, or rather that an identity has been established within him, which is not in conformity with the true identity God has given to human beings, and also is incongruous with the special identity God has given each person.

We conclude, nevertheless, that man has an identity. It is the identity of a fallen person within an evil system. From these resources man draws in order to fulfil himself.

The Conflict of Guilts

Man was made for only one aeon – that of God. He is thus in conflict with his essential self, the self that is in the image of God. The difficulty with establishing identity, i.e. living in conformity with one's true identity, is that when a person seeks to relate to different systems or backgrounds, or moves from his basic pattern of identity, then he is in strong conflict. Since man was made for God and His creation he must always lose his true identity when he departs from that parameter. That is why Jesus said, 'No man can serve two masters, for either he will love the one and hate the other, or cling to one and despise the other.'

The basic command for life, to love God with all one's being, and at the same time to love others, is the command which ensures true identity. When man departs from this he is aligning himself with another. Man is so made that although he cannot serve two masters (by nature of the case), yet he must serve one, whoever that one may be. Yet if he serves another

than God he is in conflict. This is what we mean by saying he is caught in guilt. It is the guilt of *being*, or rather, not being what one should be. Guilt attaches not only to wrongdoing, but primarily to wrong-being. Guilt then acts as its own inner-dynamic, perverse as it is. Guilt of non-true being and guilts of wrong actions compound themselves, thus setting the false identity, so increasing anger, frustration and similar elements, all of which further complicate the situation.

If man did not basically, essentially, belong to the true aeon, God's age and system, then he would not be visited with pain of being, and dislocation of spirit. If he were attuned to God's purposiveness for him and his development, then he would increasingly work out his true being, his own identity.

The Idols of the Corrupt Aeons

In Galatians 1:4 and I John 2:15-17 Paul and John speak of a corrupt age or system, i.e. the evil system. Paul tells how God has rescued us from this age through the Cross, whilst John warns us against relating to the evil aeon. He speaks of developing attachments to it which bring lust and destruction. He says the age or *kosmos* is ephemeral. It looks substantial but it is passing away, so one who attaches himself to it also passes away with it. By contrast he who does the will of God abides forever, i.e. he maintains his true self in obedience.

Because man is in the image of God, he has natural affinity with God. This we have seen in that son, creature, subject correlate with God as Father, Creator and King. It is natural for man, as unfallen, to worship God, and to derive his emotional satisfaction, as well as his personal fulfilment, from God. Because God is love, man also is created to love. Hence he must express the two elements of worship and love. When he refuses to give these to God, then *he must*

give them to someone or something. Hence the idols.

The idols make it easier for him to re-rationalise the Deity, the creation, and the humanity to which he must relate, So the idol becomes the projection of his inner image of how and what things ought to be. He is delighted with his idol because he created it. However he does not realise what inner dislocation, what functional disorientation he is expressing and compounding when he comes to his idols. His idols help him to identify with a system. He objectifies his system in the idols.' They have the elements of fatherhood, creator-being, and kingship, yet they do not pose the same dreaded authority which fallen man rejects. The devotee sees his idol as being under his control, but using its supra-human and supra-mundane powers to help him. He is not bound to the finite, the creaturely, the contingent. He is free.

This is all illusion. Very soon the idols become tyrants. They divide the self of man. Leaving aside the Biblical teaching that idols pertain to demonic forces, man expresses his own authority and submission within the parameter of the idol. He thus becomes caught in the complexity of his self approach. This is how the idols dominate him. They issue new laws. They use innate human guilt to develop legalisms and dreads. Very soon, as we have said, the bondages become severe. Man is dreadfully a divided self.

He is divided because his essential created self (the image of God) can be satisfied with nothing less than reality, i.e. God's creational reality. His rebellion has made him reject this system for the other system of autonomous freedom. It, however, is from Satanic origins. It promises freedom but brings dreadful bondage (II Peter 2: 19). Man is unable because of the first aeon to establish himself in the second. Hence his identity cannot be established. The identity he achieves is basically untrue. Because he has exchanged the truth of God (i.e. the truth of all things) for a lie (Rom 1:25) he has to live a lie. Thus genuine identity is denied.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Basis for Identity Recovery

The Prophetic Promises

We have noted briefly in chapter three that prophecy tells the promises of God and gives hope to man, even when he does not deserve it. This is called God's grace, i.e. His unmitigated liberality.

We simply say that God loves His creation and sets out to renew it. For man's identity to be recovered God must renew all things for man. That is he must renew man to a true understanding of Himself, of nature and of his own personal being. Whilst things do not essentially change through the Fall, yet to man they have become changed. Evil cannot actually destroy the good of God, but it can make man believe it is altered, and that evil has some triumph. When God renews man to all things it is as though He had renewed all things. In another sense He does renew all things by purging them of the affects and effects of evil. This is seen in II Corinthians 5:17, Revelation 21:1-5, etc.

The basis for renewed (recovered) identity is the work of God in His Son, Jesus Christ. 'The promises of that work come through the prophets. In the prophets the following elements (amongst others) are promised:- Renewal of the heavens and the earth. Renewal of Israel as a nation, hence the renewal of the Kingdom of Israel which seems to be also the Kingdom of God, The renewal of Covenant, i.e. the Abrahamic Covenant, will be fulfilled in the New Covenant, bringing forgiveness of sins, the abolition

of Mosaic rituals and sacrificial cultic elements. The renewal of man is promised; he will become a new creation.²

The prophetic utterances of God are not empty. Nor are they to be seen as the wistful or patriotic expressions of the national prophets. Anyone can stand up and say something in the nature of pious utterance. Not so the Hebrew prophets. Few of them liked their task. None of them revelled in it. All of them were afraid of God, awed by His communications, and aware of their special calling. None of the prophets was there simply to be predictive. Primarily they exhorted, and promise or threat of judgement fortified the exhortation. They were not at all interested in prediction for its own sake, or because it attracted some hearers.

We do know that at the time of Jesus' coming the nation was agog with the prophetic anticipation. In fact this sense of the prophetic was actually a danger to the ministry and person of Jesus. He muted rather than sharpened much of his own ministry. The people had seen more than one prophet, and they had known pretender messiahs.

The Foundations of Recovery

What can actually reach a man, and make an objective change in him? What can really affect him, effecting the change from an unreal identity to the real one? Theology per se cannot do that. Certain religious approaches may effect some subjective change, but then so may many other things, such as art, literature, thinking and the like. What can possibly be the basis for a radical shift in man which will take him

² The following Scriptures promise renewal in some form or other:- Ezek 36:24-28, 37:1-14, Zeph 3:17 (RSV), Isa 66:22f, Dan 12:2, cf. II Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15, Ephes 4:22-24, Col t:9-10, Rev 21:1-5.

from his rebellion, his malfunctional relations with his universe, and place him in real relations?

When we claim the answer to be the love of God we really must mean the acts of love which God does, and which are related to where man is, especially errant man. That in fact is the claim we make. We assert that the incarnation and ministry of Christ were there for the purposes of defeating the powers of evil which hold man in thrall, even if it be said that man has come willingly enough into such thrall. Something must happen to liberate him from his idolatries. He must be released from the doom which hangs over the evil aeon, the judgement which comes to men who are part of it.

That judgement on all evil has taken place in Jesus Christ. The following Scriptures assert that the judgement of evil powers, of the evil aeon, and of sinful man has taken place in the judgement which Christ himself both bore and effected on the Cross: Hebrews 2:14–15, Galatian 1:4, 6:14, Romans 6:6, II Corinthians 5:21, I Peter 2:24, Galatians 2:20, 5:24, I Peter 3:18, Colossians 2:14–15. These Scriptures tell us that all evil was taken up into him, the aseptic Christ, so to speak, who destroyed their diseased evil, and purged their pollution, and absorbed and bore the judgement due to man. Sin was judged in his flesh and so there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ (Rom 8:1–3). Christ was God's judgement upon all forms of evil. By bearing human guilt he took away evil's power (Rom 6: 1–10)'.

The Liberating Christ

What has often been missed is that Jesus is the paradigm for *true humanity*. Many have supposed that Christ was more than man, confusing his deity with his humanity. The two are distinct. It is just that Jesus never drew upon his resident deity in order to be man, or to effect full manliness. Hence

the point is missed that Jesus is true man, over and against created man unfallen (i.e. Adam). Thus his humanity has gone close to being deified. Or it has been a docetic humanity.

Whilst it is true that we cannot know the mystery of the co-existence of these two natures (as they have been called), yet we know there is one person. We know that he emptied himself in and for the incarnation, but we do not rightly understand what that emptying is. We know more of what it is not, i.e. that it is not the emptying out of himself of his deity, but rather that manhood and servanthood become the true Son, that they wear well on him.

Things which we can know are that he was Son, Prophet, Priest, and King. He was Son, creature, and servant, but with these things he was also the others. It is not our purpose to develop his works as prophet, priest and king, but they are there for us to see in the N.T. John was more than a prophet because he saw what he had prophesied come to pass, and saw what the other prophets had prophesied coming to pass. Jesus then was a prophet also, and even more than a prophet, i.e. no less than John. Since, however, he was the very spirit of prophecy (Rev 19: 10) – since the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus – then Jesus was 'More-than-more-than a prophet'. He was the true, the fontal, the archetypal prophet.

Likewise as the writer of Hebrews teaches us most intelligently, he was more than a priest, for his order was that of Melchizedek, and not that of Aaron. However it was the nature of his priestly work that the writer of Hebrews shows in his letter. This high order of priesthood is the source from which man may derive the priestly ministry he must exercise in the universe. We shall cover this point more fully in a later chapter.³

³ See Chapter 14. Also see Hebrews 5: 1–10, .6:20 –8: 7, 9:1–10: 15.

The Kingship of Jesus is the burden of the Gospels, and in particular of the Gospel of Matthew. Not only is he born King of the Jews, much to Herod's horror and anger, but he is ultimately welcomed into Jerusalem as such, and it is on the count of this claim that he is finally crucified. Indeed this is the inscription placed on the Cross above his head, 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.'

We conclude then that it is as Prophet, Priest and King that he accomplishes the work he has been given to do. It is a saving work. It saves creation from the infringement and enslavement of evil, and it saves man from the doom that is over him because of his sin.

How the powers of this redemption work in man we cannot fully explore in this study, but we will see how the work completed by Christ is effected in man by the Holy Spirit.. Neither the Spirit nor Christ's work are imposed upon man, but they do confront him in the Word, and by the Holy Spirit. In fact those already redeemed witness to the power and truth of the Gospel. Thus the true church confronts man who lives in his unreality of idols and self-extension. The bare truth confronts man, and he is unable to deny it. He can only add to the lie he already lives by denying it. Otherwise he must see it, recognise it as truth, and so repent and come to faith and redemption.

It cannot, therefore, be said that God has not worked to fulfil His prophetic promises. We know that He has always been fulfilling these as the processes of history take place, but then once, supremely in Christ, He has caused the redemptive promises to be fulfilled. Doubtless, at the end of the age the eschatological climax of all the promises and all the work shall be made manifest.

CHAPTER SIX

The Spirit & the Recovery of Reality & Identity

True identity is alignment with reality, God's reality, whatever form it may take. Man living the lie cannot recognise the truth. That is why Jesus said a man must be born of the Spirit before he can see the Kingdom. Without such rebirth or new birth he cannot enter the Kingdom. Paul reiterates the thought when he says that the natural man (psychical man) cannot receive the things of the Spirit since they are foolishness unto him. He means that the Cross is foolishness to natural human thinking, which of course it is. Christ, however, is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and the Cross is God's wise way of bringing redemption to man.

That redemption is conveyed by the Spirit. He must first convict man of sin', righteousness and judgement, after which he can reveal the love of God in the Cross and Resurrection of His Son. Such love alone can grip the will of man, turning him to repentance and faith. The gifts of repentance and faith are brought to man by the Spirit (Acts 5:30-31), and when he exercises them he is redeemed.

The vast work of showing man the foolishness of the lie he has espoused and the wisdom of the way of God is the work the Spirit must perform in what Paul called, 'the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit' (Titus 3:5). This work is effected by the Holy Spirit, i.e. he applies the work of the Cross and Resurrection in the life of the new believer. II Corinthians 5:17 with Titus 3:5 show us that if any man is in Christ then he is a new creation.

Old things have passed away because they have been made new. Romans 8:1–3 and II Corinthians 3:17, in their contexts, show us that man is renewed by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, and is free. He is free from sin's penalty, pollution and power, as also he is free from evil enemies, and the entire world-system, i.e. the evil aeon.

This means that man is free to serve God, and free in the serving of God and man. It means of course that man is back in reality, i.e. God's reality which is the basic reality.

The Spirit, Prophecy and Covenant

Lest we think that suddenly at a point in history a power called the Holy Spirit intervenes without notice to apply the objective work of Christ to the subjective apprehension of man, let us see that prophecy has always proceeded from the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit of prophecy has always been the testimony of Jesus (Rev 19:10). In I Peter 1:10–12 and II Peter 1:20–21 we are told that prophecy has always been contingent upon the Holy Spirit. He is the Breath that brings life creationally, providentially and redemptionally. When God sends out His Holy Breath it brings creation into being, and should creation wane through evil, the Holy Spirit renews it.

However it is in the matter of redemption that the Holy Spirit is active. He has prophesied the coming redemption in Christ, for through him the prophets receive the promises of God. He has helped to structure history so that it will come to its redemptive climax in Christ. Yet all of this he does in conformity with his own prophecies. This is seen on two levels, (a) The Spirit is promised time and again, when there are predictions of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel, and (b) The Spirit is the promise of the New Covenant. Paul makes this plain in Galatians 3:13–14. He allies the gift of the Spirit with the Abrahamic

Covenant, but in Ezekiel 36:24–28 it is linked with the renewal of Israel, or the New Covenant as prophesied in Jeremiah 31: 31– 34, mentioned in Luke 1: 67–79 (the Song of Zechariah, the Benedictus). The new heart and new Spirit of Ezekiel 36 parallel the internalised law and the forgiveness of sins seen in Jeremiah 31. Hence we conclude that the Spirit does not come arbitrarily, but in accordance with prophecy.

The Spirit of Truth is the Spirit of Reality

Truth and reality are the one thing. Truth is things as they really are, and for man this means creation as God Himself brought it into being, and caused it to function. It is this truth which man exchanged for the lie. When we are told by the Psalmist that there is no one who seeks after God and no one who understands Him, then we recognise that this barrier to knowledge has to be broken down. Motivation to know the truth must be generated in the human heart. Doubtless it is the Spirit who can do that. By constant reiteration of the truth he draws man to desire the truth. Jesus, incarnate, is the Truth, incarnate, for he is 'full of grace and truth'. As indeed is his Father.

Jesus said, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' On one occasion he said to his disciples, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life ,' but he added lest' they think of him alone as the absolute and independent truth, 'No man comes to the Father but by me ,' meaning he was the truth (as also the life and way) of the Father. This truth cannot be seen apart from him.

He said to his Father, 'Thy word is truth ,' meaning that when God speaks it is true, it is reality. Meaning also the truth is what men must know. Only this truth will save and set free. Yet man is caught in his lie. Satan is the father of lies. He has been a liar from the beginning. He blinds the eyes of men

lest they see the light of God in the Gospel of Christ. Who then will give truth to men? The answer is, 'The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.'

In John's Gospel Jesus refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13). It is this *truth* which will convince (convict) men of sin and righteousness and judgement. The same *truth* the world, of itself, cannot receive, but it will be the *truth* of God, namely the person and work of Christ, which is at the one and same time the work and person of the Father. In fact Jesus says, 'He will guide you *into* all the *truth*,' since truth is not merely notional understanding, but the very action of life. Hence, 'These are those who lie and do not the truth.' That is why Paul can speak of 'trudging it in love' (Ephes 4:15). To be led into the truth is to understand it, 'as it is in Jesus' (Ephes 4:21).

In other words, by the powers and gifts which are his, the Holy Spirit confronts man with truth, with reality. He makes the way open to man to come to the truth, both in the understanding of his mind, and the actions of his person. This is what Jesus means by, 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' To conform once again to things—as-they—really—are is liberation from the lie, liberty to live, and liberty in the living out of these true things. All of this is the effect of the work of Christ, and the application of it by the Spirit of truth.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Fruits of Christ & The Spirit in the New Identity

It is the work of Christ applied by the Spirit which brings us to *the new context* man now knows. This context is not one merely of human individualism, but rather of personal incorporation into (a) The people of God, (b) The Kingdom of God, and (c) The Body of Christ. It is, simultaneously, incorporation into all three. This is quite rich, when considered thoughtfully.

The effects of the Fall were to destroy the fulfilment of the creational mandate as given in Genesis 1 and reiterated in Genesis 9. Also to effect a break in man's relationships with God, with others, and with himself. Finally it affected his relationship with the created universe. In other words man has lived 'in the division of hatred, bitterness, and resentment. He has withdrawn from total relationships. In other words he has insulated himself against receiving, as well as giving in true relationship. This means, in effect, that he has lost his true identity by not truly identifying.

Isaiah 59:2 says it is man's sins which have brought separation from God. The same sins separate man from man. In II Corinthians 5: 14–15, Paul says, '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.' He means that true love identifies totally with another. Whilst man would not identify with the holy God, Christ, in the

Father, identified with sinful man. 'We judge that when one died for all then did all die.' and 'I have been crucified with Christ,' mean that Christ has taken the initiative in becoming one with man. That is the message of Philippians 2:5-8, II Corinthians 8:9, I Peter 2:24, and II Corinthians 5:21.

It is this message, only, which will cause man to respond to the exhortation, 'We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.' The Gospel, brought to the heart of man by the Spirit, effects this response. Man sees God first loved him, and he loves because of that. In fact the truth of love, which is the whole of truth, rightly considered, now comes to man. Where he hated God he loves Him. Where he hated others he loves them, and where he hated himself, he now recognises the creational work of God in making him in His image, and the redemptional work of Christ and the Spirit whereby he is being restored to the fullness of that image.

Another way of saying this is that man is brought to the place where he receives and exhibits the fruit (or harvest) of the Spirit in his life, both as a person, and then corporately, as the Body of Christ and the people of God. These fruit, as Paul describes them in Galatians 5:22 and 23 are, 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control'.

Man Living in the Corporate Unity of the Spirit

A true Biblicist will know that the three great corporate unities we have mentioned – the people of God, the Kingdom of God, and the Body of Christ are all functional unities, i.e. they are not merely *aggregates* of people but rather *congregates*, or as we may say, people who are 'together-together'. –That is they are not simply grouped together but have an inner and essential unity. It is within these three contexts that persons have their true identity. It is

what they are identified with that gives them identity. They are literally members of these three unities, and although the three must not be merged, yet it is impossible to belong to one without belonging to all.

We have seen that the unredeemed sinner is identified with Satan, his hosts, and his system, i.e. the kingdom of darkness. Thus he has his identity against the authentic order of creation. Hence his confusion, dislocation and disorientation. Hence his deep suffering and misery, however he may attempt to cover it up, or compensate for it. Colossians 1:13 says simply, 'God has transferred us from the powers of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love.' A new identification has begun, hence a new or renewed identity.

To have the privileges of the covenant-people of God is what adds to life, enriching it. To be in the Kingdom of God and to know its powers (I Cor 4:20) and its riches (Rom 14: 17) is to be equipped in one's true self. To be a member of Christ's Body is to share in 'that which every joint supplies.' It is to give and receive in mutual relationship. In fact it is to share in the fullness of love. Christ's prayer of John 17:20ff, Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3:14-19, and Peter's exhortation of I Peter 1:22 all show that love is the basic unity of the Kingdom, the people of God, and the Body of Christ. John's exposition of the same (I John 4:7-20) shows that love is the true motivation for all action, but that that love is the love of God in us which has been preceded by the love of God (in action) for us.

We cannot overstress the point just made, that to be part of a body of people, a kingdom, and the church is of immense importance to each member-person. Others have emphasised the truth that faith, indeed life, cannot be privatised or individualised. Whilst it must be personalised it must not be lived in isolation. A person must not simply think in terms of himself, but in terms of others. He is a societal creature, and must act accordingly. We do not have time

here to speak of the personal operations of the Spirit within each member, or even corporately with all members, but since we read of 'the love of the Spirit', 'the fellowship of the Spirit', 'the unity of the Spirit', we can see that He is concerned to initiate, install and maintain love, unity and fellowship.

From our point of view he then must be the Spirit of identification.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Man in His Personal Identification

Galatians 2:20 is in many ways a curious verse. Paul's statement that he has been crucified with Christ and yet he lives is perhaps intelligible. When he says, 'It is not I that live, but Christ that lives in me,' we tend to think in mystical terms. Paul has become one with Christ, and Christ one with him. Now whilst this is true relationally, it is not true personally. That is Paul is not Christ, nor Christ Paul. The relationship has been called one of faith-mysticism, i.e. by faith we become one.

Jesus said he was one with the Father, but that did not make him the Father. They were two persons, neither to be confused with the other. They were one in love. Paul, then, is Paul, and Christ, Christ. The passage on abiding-union in John 15 must be read in the same terms. Abiding should not be difficult since we have seen that man has been created to be contingent. He can lean upon God, upon Christ. In fact he needs to do this. Also in doing this he *is structured to receive that which he needs*. The oneness is not merely commendable, it is indispensable.

Terms Relating to Union and Unity

The New Testament speaks often of our being *in Christ*. We also have the terms 'with Christ', and 'through (by means of) Christ'. The other notions such as abiding, co-working, co-suffering and the like underline the truth that the believer cannot live

in a privatised and independent life-style. However what we may miss is that God is the source of all that we are, all that we can be, and all that we are called upon to do. I Corinthians 1:30 says of God, 'He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. He means the Father is the source of all our life, and what is needed He has placed in His Son. Whilst it is true that we need to draw upon him. in order to receive the benefits of these four things – wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption – yet it is also true that we *can have none of these things apart from him*.

As important, if not more important is that we have no gifts and capacities which have not come from him (of. I Cor 4: 7), and it is also true that for our functions, modes, offices and their exercise we are wholly contingent upon the Son. As we will see we are sons, creatures, servants, prophets, priests and kings, and all of these at one and the same time. This gives meaning to Paul's statement, 'I live, yet not r. That is my life is wholly dependent upon his. It also explains the statement, 'And the life which I live in the flesh (i.e. the body), I live by the faith of (or, faith in) the Son of God'. Thus when Paul says in Colossians 3: 3, 'Your life is hid with Christ in God ,' he is saying something very practical. He describes our contingency, and the dynamic it produces for authentic living. *It is in the total identification that we become total identities, provided of course we understand that all of this is in the context of total contingency.*

We are now in a position to examine our identity as it is in the Father, the Son, and by the agency of the Spirit. Our identity pertains firstly to creation, and secondly to redemption. Redemption is remedial of the creational because of what has happened in the Fall. What we are to be ultimately must have figured in the work of creation. Let us look at the work of God in creating us.

The Birth of Man and the Knowledge of God

Psalm 139:13–18 should be read as a complete pattern of thought:–

'For Thou didst form my inward parts,
Thou didst knit me together in my mother's
womb. I praise Thee, for Thou art fearful and
wonderful.
Wonderful are Thy works!
Thou knowest me right well;
my frame was not hidden from Thee,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.
Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in Thy book were written, every one of
them, the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.
How precious to me are Thy thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
When I awake, I am Still with Thee.'

In verse 13 The Jerusalem Bible has,

'It was you who created my inmost self,
and put me together in my mother's womb.'

The inference is that 'I am what I am because of what You designed me to be.' There is nothing harshly deterministic in this because the Psalmist trusts the Creator to have done well. His statement': is, 'In Thy book was written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.' This means man is not left to his own devices. His Creator intimately concerns Himself with His creature. This is underlined by Isaiah 49:1b, 'The Lord called me from the womb. From the

body of my mother He named me'.^{4*}

On the wider scene – that which man is generally – we need to go back to our Scriptures which relate to creation. These are Genesis 1: 26–31, 5: 1–3, Psalm 8:3ff, Ecclesiastes 3:11, 7:29, I Corinthians 11: 7. What we see from these references is that man is in the image of God, that he has been given mutuality of being with other humans in the context of affinity with God. He has been given powers of procreation, and has as his goal the filling up of the earth, the subduing of its dynamic elements into controlled government, and then stewardship of it and its resources. Doubtless the creational mandate demands the use of all gifts and powers that God has given to man.

Doubtless in the mandate of Genesis 1: 28ff is some thought of an end, a goal, a *telos*. The earth cannot be filled up without leading to some denouement. This means man has both vocation and purpose, because of the implied goal. Only when we look at man's rebellion, and the particular expression of it in the tower of Babel, do we see how the gifts of God, when used angrily and selfishly, can be dangerous. Hence, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and *nothing they propose to do will be impossible to them.*'

What we need to see is what man is, and what he does in accordance with God's creational norm.

⁴ On what we may call the negative side we see in Psalm 58:t, Isaiah 48:8b, and Proverbs 16:4 that evil is also known from birth. Here the emphasis appears to be on the determined and recalcitrant will of man. It is linked, however, with the knowledge of God.

CHAPTER NINE

Man and His Personal Identity Man as Created: Man the Son

What Human Sonship Is

We have seen that man as created is a son of the Father. Without unduly pressing Luke 3:38 and Acts 17:28–30 it is evident that man, in creation, has the functional structure of a son, a child of God. Hebrews 1:3 speaks of the eternal Son as being 'the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,' and doubtless man as the image of God was intended to be just this. Certainly man has the closest affinity with God of all creatures, and is His true reflection. Confirming his sonship is the fact that man is reprimanded for giving Fatherhood to idols (Acts 17:28–30, Jet 2:26f, of. Rom 1:21–25), and that Jesus told the woman of Samaria that the *Father* sought His children to worship Him (John 4: 21–24). Worship of God as Father and not worship of idols is the principle underlined.

If we accept the claim that man is ontologically a son, and that sonship is not merely figurative, then we have to discover the nature, ontologically, of a son. The question is, 'How do we do this? How do we discover what true sonship is, i.e. for a human being?' We can research from creation what a son is, since Luke 3:38 says, 'Adam was the son of God.' This must relate to what we have said of Hebrews 1: 3, that a son is intended to be 'the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person.'

When we pursue the identity of a son we see that Adam did not act congruently with being a son. Nor did his son Cain, who murdered his own brother. That is Cain was not a true son to Adam, nor to the Father, God (cf. I John 4: 20). Abel obviously was a son to his own father, as indeed to God. This is borne out by John's statements in I John 3:10–11 that the true children (of God) do deeds of righteousness and do not hate (i.e. they love) the brethren. Cain is immediately nominated as a child of the devil, for such do evil deeds and hate the brethren. Abel of course is nominated a child of God.

The Fall naturally enough has obscured the ideal of a son, or, as we should say, that which is normative for a true son. Even so, in human relationships we have a fair idea of what true sonship is. We connate ideas of love to parents, obedience to their commands, love of the brethren, and then – as a primary concept – cooperation with the parents in the business of the family. Most families pursue the business of life corporately. The vocation of the family is, the vocation of each son and daughter.

When we come to the incarnate Son we can see the nature of ontological sonship. It is as the Son lives it. This Sonship displays the nature of ontological fatherhood, for this must derive from the Father Himself. Nevertheless we must not think of the Sonship of Jesus as being that inspired by his deity and worked out in the power of it. Jesus' Sonship of the Father is worked out purely in human terms, and not in supra-human terms. He is made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as such shows what true human sonship is. He shows this as he lives with his parents. He shows this as he lives with his Father.

We cannot enter into the total description of God's Fatherhood as Jesus tells it and teaches it. Sources are available. In Matthew they concern the principles given in the Sermon on the Mount. Here the material is extensive, relating to prayer, alms-giving,

behaviour in the Family of God, trust in the Father for the needs of life, and in love to enemies. In Matthew 11:25–28 is a significant statement in regard to son-discipleship. In Matthew 23:1–12 Jesus points to the ontological categories of Fatherhood, Messiahhood and Teacherhood. In Matthew 12:46–50 he teaches the principle of sonship, i.e., 'Whoever does the will of my Father.' In all these sections he is asking men not to work up to God's Fatherhood from what they know of human fatherhood, but rather to see God's Fatherhood as He reveals it, and then to work down to human fatherhood. It goes almost without saying that human antipathy to authority is present in the child-parent relationship. Hence the bias against human fatherhood. Which precedes which is not clear, but that man has a bias against God because of a bias against human fatherhood is evident. Whilst that antipathy may be hidden even from the subject it will nevertheless be shown in other expressions of antipathy to authority.

The Gospel of John is an evident source of material on Sonship and Fatherhood, and so on human sonship and fatherhood. It is here we see the true ontology of sonship. The Word becomes flesh and is seen as the only Son of the Father, full of truth and grace – a pleasant reminder of the true nature of the Father, i.e. 'full of grace and truth'. No man has ever seen God; the Son reveals Him. He who has seen the Son has seen the Father. We can thus say that he who has seen the Son Jesus has seen true (ontological) sonship, and also true ontological fatherhood in the Father. The obedience of the Son reveals what is true obedience. The willingness of the Father to show the Son all things because He loves him, tells us what true Fatherhood is. That the Father gives all things into the hands of the Son (John 3: 35, cf. Matt 11:27) tells us that genuine sonship takes responsibility in obedience.

Again the Son does nothing of himself, but the Father works within him, doing the works He desires

to be done. These are *all the works* the Son does, and the final works of the Cross and Resurrection are the climax to which the Father works via the Son. Even then, whilst the matters of salvation are completed, the Son must ascend to the Father, and this turns discipleship into brotherhood of the Elder Brother (John 20: 17, cf. Matt 28: 10, Heb 2: 11–17, Rom 8: 29).

Rich as is the Johannine material, both in the Gospel and the Epistles, the other epistles are also affluent with references to Fatherhood and Sonship. All Pauline epistles open with the significant, 'Grace be to you, and peace from *God our Father* and the Lord Jesus Christ'. This *our Father* is always linked with 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Romans 8:14–17 and Galatians 3:26 – 4:6 are classical passages on human sonship to divine Fatherhood. Ephesians is redolent with this truth. 1: 5–7, 3:14–15, and 4:6 speak of human sonship with God, Divine Fatherhood of sonship, whilst 2:11–18 speaks of the entrance of aliens into the family of the Father. In I and II Thessalonians we find the church is 'in God the Father'. In the Epistle to the Hebrews Christ's Sonship – as also God's Fatherhood – is pursued significantly, even though it differs somewhat in its emphasis. In this Epistle Christ's Sonship is creatorial, then redemptive. It is also linked with priesthood, and both with obedience and spiritual maturation. Christ's being as Elder Brother infers we are younger brothers and so song of the Father. Such sons are disciplined by the Father (cf. ch. 12), Who chastises because He loves.

And so we might go on. What is significant to us, however, is that man in creation has been given the gift of sonship, and so has been related to God as Father. This ontological fact ensures that man through rebirth or regeneration (let alone adoption) is restored to true sonship. The sonship structures if we are permitted that term – are now renewed in regeneration. Man does not go beyond being a man

by becoming a son afresh, but rather his true manhood is restored and renewed. We mean that for a man to fulfil his true identity demands he become a son through Christ Jesus (Ephes 1: 5) so that his innate sonship may be expressed.

CHAPTER TEN

The Outworking of Sonship In Identity

When then we ask what is the expression of sonship, we must answer that this sonship falls into two elements of expression, (i) A relational state and action, and (ii) A consequent and functional filial obedience. The relationship helps man to be what he is. Briefly we say that man cannot relate to another or others of the human race unless he first relates to God as Father (through the Son and the Holy Spirit). Whilst this may appear radical, and even bewildering, it is nevertheless true. I John 3: 10ff with I John 4:19–5:3 show us that man is not capable of carrying on a true (and unselfish) relationship except through the Father. This of course implies also except through the Son and the Spirit. To put it another way, ‘True relationships are familial, and the familial is contingent upon the Paternal.’ This truth is shown in Ephesians 3: 14–15 where God is the source of all fatherhood and familyhood, and Ephesians 4:6 where the ‘above’ and ‘through’ and ‘in’ all things is the basis of true familial relations, hips.

When we look at our "(ii)" above we think upon ‘a consequent and functional filial obedience.’ The Son was functionally obedient and this was the expression and fulfilment of his true Sonship. Likewise it must be ours. In all things he was obedient. He learned obedience through the things that he suffered. Only then could he be shown as the True Son, and only then act in that office and capacity.

When we seek to know what sonship is in functional obedience we are met with the statement, ‘As

many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.’ Of course, for Christ is the paradigm of true sonship. In all he did he was led by the Spirit. This is a fact, as also it is an indispensable principle. John’s Gospel tells us that sonship is not merely on the affectional and emotional level of relationship, but it is actionally on the level of the obedience. Relationship and obedience are presupposed to be the one. Jesus said, ‘My Father has always been working and I work,’ meaning that he is not merely demonstrating his oneness with the Father in relationship, but oneness in action. Since all God’s acts are purposive and nothing is unrelated to the telos, i.e. the eschatological goal, then obedience is required for the fulfilment of God’s plan.

The question of Christ’s struggle in Gethsemane is constantly raised. Two explanations are offered. The first is that he had inner conflict about going to the Cross, but nevertheless submitted. In this, it is said, he was simply being human. The second explanation is that he feared to die in the garden, and prayed for God to save him from death in the garden. This is feasible and even probable in the light of Hebrews 5: 7–8. Whatever the explanation, one thing is clear – his cry of ‘Abba!’ was pure. His filial obedience was never in doubt, but his obedience was necessary for the redemption of the *kosmos*. It was the unitive act of Father and Son.

This unitive action is displayed perfectly upon the Cross. His first cry is a filial one, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ His last cry is equally filial, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.’ Both are trusting, without fear. Psalm 16 is undoubtedly in Christ’s mind, as Peter affirms at Pentecost. ‘You will not suffer your Holy One to see corruption.’ That is why Paul says in Romans 1:4 that he was ‘designated to be the Son of God by his *resurrection* from the dead,’ and this is what he means when he says in Romans 6:4 that ‘he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.’ The Filial

Paternal relationship is present.

The truth then that emerges for us is that man is not truly man until he is filially obedient, co-operating with the Father in His outworking plan for the *kosmos* and the human race. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 and of the father and two brothers in Matthew 21 both presuppose the family fulfilling its familial plan or vocation.

None of this will make sense unless we see that the Father created man to share with Him in His eternal purposes. It will make no sense unless we read the Christly paradigm of sonship apart from mere moralistic obedience. Obedience is always purposive. The Son in I Corinthians 15:24–28 is working out the final section of God's purposive plan. He intends to bring all evil enemies under his feet. By creation he is Cosmocrator, but by redemption he works this out in the arena of creation where sinful humanity and evil powers oppose the true *telos* of God. Having done this, with the aid of the church (his brethren), he will turn and give the Kingdom to *the* Father, that God may be all in all.

We have noted that Christ's Sonship as man is linked with his priestly ministry. The writer of Hebrews tells us this. So then, our sonship will be linked with our priesthood, for that also is given to us. However that may be, we need one final note to conclude this section. It is this: our sonship of the Father, although personal, is also, and at the 'same time, corporate, i.e. collective.

We mean that as Israel was the son of God (Exodus 4: 22, cf. Hosea 11: 1), 'he was son in a' collective or corporate way. It is true of course (cf. Deut 14: 1, 32: 19) that each true Israelite was a son of God, but never this out of the collective context. Hosea 11:1 is applied to Jesus and his Sonship in Matthew 2: 14, and so his Sonship is collective. He is all Israel in his Sonship of the Father. Galatians 3:26–29 makes it clear that we are all sons of God through faith in him, and that we are *one* in Christ Jesus.. This means

- (a) The source and life and measure of sonship is in our participation in Christ, and
- (b) We draw from and share in his obedience, his acts of working with and for the Father. This is well set out in John 14:10–14. What the Son does we will do. What we will do in the will of God is what the Son will have done through us.

By this time the reader may be weary. He may be wondering at this discursus on sonship, and why it is so detailed. In fact the writer, with his detailed explanation, may have obscured the principle. Yet the discursus is needed to show the importance of living in true identity. Unless we understand the creational and then the redemptional nature of sonship, and unless we understand the personal and yet corporate nature of Christ's Sonship we will miss the principle of sonship which is indispensable to the true identity of any person, and man as the collective whole, especially that whole as it is humanity in Christ.

Rightly understood in relational, and actional elements, any child of God, along with the children of God, can press along in his (or their) true identity. Otherwise not.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Our Identity as Servants

We reiterate the point that our identity comes from God as our Source, His intention for us as persons, and our response, in integrity, to that calling or vocation of life itself. The degree of authentic identity is the degree of our acceptance of God's work in us, His plan for us, and the acceptance of what we are, and what we are about.

When it comes to this authentic living it cannot be other than related to being servants. Since being servants implies both work and obedience we must note again fallen human resistance to these two elements. This resistance is a result of the Fall. Hence we generally misread being servants as being servile and inferior. This is not so.

The reason it is not so is that God is the paradigm of Servanthood. He is the True Servant. God worked in creation, and having done that work rested from it, but not from work. Jesus points this out in John 5: 17 and context. He says his Father has always been working, and that he too, goes on working. God works in sustaining Providence. He works in redemption. He works in the regeneration and glorification both of man and the creation. In fact He never ceases to work. Whilst the so-called Puritan work-ethic may have induced an obsession concerning working, it does not mean that 'no-work' is the true principle. Frenetic working, guilt-compelled working may well be wrong, but work is what God commanded man to do.

The old illusion persists. Not to work is superior. To get others to work for you is cunning. To work is

inferior. Whilst slavery may undoubtedly be demeaning, working is not. We need a true ethic of working based upon the nature of God as the True Worker. Whilst a sense of alienation may come to man that he is prevented by certain systems from enjoying the fruit of his work, a deeper alienation is shown to be experienced when he is not permitted to work at all!

The Father then is Worker. So is the Son. So is the Holy Spirit. So is man, ontologically. It is a lie that the punishment given by God because of the Fall forced man to work. He certainly did not eat the lotus-lily in Eden. Whilst Eden means 'Delight', and whilst every tree of the garden was good for food and pleasant to the eyes, yet man was told to 'keep the garden and tend it', and this was of course work. The creational mandate was to work not only in Eden but to fill up the whole earth, subdue it, and exercise stewardship over it. This, of course, was work. We have suggested that it was purposive, and had God's *telos* in mind.

The Son when he came, came to do the works of God. 'We must do the works of Him Who sent me,' he said. In John's Gospel he never tires of telling the commands of God, and his desire to do them. This is how he shows his love to the Father. He says, 'This command have I received from my Father.' 'The Son does nothing but what the Father tells him.' It is his food and drink to do the will of the Father.

The principle of the Servant is found in the history of Israel. Israel is the servant of God, just as it is the- son of God. The prophets are 'My servants the prophets.' God has served Israel by delivering the people from Egypt. Forty years they saw His works in the wilderness. They themselves were commanded to work. In six days they were to complete that work and cease from such work on the seventh. Sadly enough they served the idols so many times. To worship and to serve are virtually the same. That is why Pharaoh is told by God, 'Let My people go that they may serve Me.'

When Israel did not truly serve God it was punished. In exile it has to learn its lesson. However the problem of suffering was not easy to understand. That is why the teaching in the latter portion of Isaiah's prophecy is so important. Israel is yet to be the servant of God. This term 'servant' has a special history. Abraham was called 'My sergeant' (Gen.-26: 24, of. 18:3,5). In Deuteronomy 9:27 Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are given this title. It is the special designation of Moses (Exodus 4:10, of. Heb 3:5, Num 12:7). In Joshua he is repeatedly called 'the servant of the Lord'(1:1, 2, 7, 13, 15, 8:31, 33, etc.). Hence when the teaching of 'The Suffering Servant' appears in Isaiah chapters 40-46 (especially 42: 1ff, 44: 1ff, 44:21ff, 49:5ff, 52:13-15, 53:1-12) it is most significant.

Christ really makes the claim that he is that Suffering Servant. He says, 'The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many.' His service was to be that of redemptive death. He also said, 'I am amongst you as one who serves .' He urged his disciples to serve one another since this was the mark of greatness. He taught by his life that subordination was not inferiority, although that myth persists in human affairs. (Cf. Mark 10:45, Matt 20:25-28, Luke 22:24-27.)

On the night of his betrayal he showed his servanthood in taking the towel and water and bathing the feet of his disciples. He also taught them to serve rather than to take the highest places. He served of course by his works of the Cross and the Resurrection. Nor does he rest in his Ascension, but goes on working. We have seen that in the passage of I Corinthians 15:24-28 where he is shown as working for the Father. He is currently working with his church and will do so until the end of the age. Whilst he works the Father also works, and will not desist until the *telos* is reached.

With this magnificent paradigm before us we too must fulfil our ontological role and office of servants.

If *kerugma* (proclamation) is a true work, and *didache* (teaching) another, the *koinonia* (the loving, working fellowship) is the context in which it is done. Yet what signifies is *diakonia*. Everyone is to be occupied with working. This is not limited to deacons.'

He Serves: We Serve

Paul, and the writer of Hebrews tell us that he is currently making intercession for us, the sons (Rom 8: 34, Heb 7: 25). This intercession is a powerful work. The Holy Spirit is also making intercession. In this case he is doing it within us (Rom 8: 26f). The Book of the Revelation pictures the Father and the Son working from the throne in the unfolding actions of history as it moves to its *telos*.

We then have service. As we will see, this has the ministry of 'prophets, and of priests. It is also a kingly service of reigning. Such service is consonant with our true identity. Paul sets out the principle of service to men in Ephesians 4:28 as, '...doing honest work with the hands, so that you may be able to give to those who have need.' Likewise Galatians 6: 10, 'D o good unto all' men... '. Before we serve men we serve God, and because we serve Him we serve others. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul says the surrender of the body brings transformation. In this context we offer 'spiritual worship' or, 'reasonable service'. This is 'doing the will of God, from the heart'. The motivating thrust comes from the cleansing of the conscience from dead works (Heb 9: 14), the washing of our robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7: 14). The outworking of this service to God is service to others from the self-same motive, i.e. God's love for us which evokes in response our love to Him (cf. John 14:15, I John 4:20). That is why Paul says, ' ...through love be servants of one another. '

The Sheer Joy of Serving

As we have gone through the Scriptures picking out this matter of serving, it may well appear that we see service as an onerous task. We may think of it as a burden to be evaded, and that of course is what has happened with many – we have sought to evade it. Yet everyone of us knows the joy of serving, at least to some degree, especially when we do it for someone we love. Jacob, in serving to obtain Rachel, ‘served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.’

Giving service to one another should be a matter of love. Indeed it is the bejewelled principle of all true work, ‘By love serve one another.’ ‘Let nothing be done without love.’ ‘Whatever you do—whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.’ ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments.’ The maid joyfully served General Naaman, even though she was a slave. Joseph loyally served Potiphar, even though he was a slave: he would not lie with that man’s wife. And so we could go on.

Doubtless because we wish to be independent, or wish to have others serve us, we see work as a punishment, service as a drudgery, servanthood as a bondage, and being a worker we understand to mean servility. Yet we have seen the paradigm of servanthood, Jesus as servant of the Father, being amongst men as one who serves, and seeing his own redemptive ministry as the very essence of service. We have seen that Israel could not really serve God until it was set free. Likewise the man who groans under a burdened conscience needs his dead and deadening works purged from his mind and heart, in which case he joyfully, gratefully serves the living God. Indeed God is only then truly alive to Him, for God has actually visited him and wholly freed him. No wonder his service is ‘reasonable’ or ‘logical’ or ‘spiritual’. No wonder the Scriptures do not differentiate between service and worship. No wonder they serve Him day

and night in His temple. The highest privilege, and the most functional tiling of all is to serve, for God has always served His creation, and will ever do so.

Hence Paul’s statement of Philippians 2: 5–7,

‘Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.’

‘Taking the form of a servant’, is a moving statement. No less is the statement concerning the Father a few verses on in the passage, ‘...for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.’ Paul is speaking of course about his own statement, ‘He who has begun a good work, will continue it right up until the day of Christ.’

As for our good works – our servanthip – they must glorify the Father. They will justify the final commendation, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.’ And the voice from heaven cries, ‘Blessed are the dead which die, henceforth in the Lord!’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ echoes the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.’

CHAPTER TWELVE

His Servants the Prophets Our Identity as Prophets

Prophecy is of course an ancient thing. God Himself initiates prophecy in Genesis 3:15 which has been called 'the golden evangel, the first prophecy'. The Fall of man and the rejection of God by man made prophecy necessary. Jesus speaks of men destroying the prophets from Abel to Zechariah. Abel is the first nominated prophet. It may well be that this was why Cain destroyed him. Sinful man dislikes the prophet to utter his exhortation and tell of the plan of God. Amos announces (3: 7), 'Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets.' Man is not left uninformed, but that does not mean he wishes to be informed. In fact man is often angry because God planned history and the events within it. He chafes against what he sees to be determinism and fate. That is why he abhors the prophets. He has a canny sense that what they say will indeed come to pass.

We need not trace the history of the prophets. It is a long one and a fascinating one. We know that there was, so to speak, a run of prophets from Abel to Joseph. Enoch is one of these prophets. Noah is a prophet. So are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses is the prophet par excellence. In Deuteronomy 18 he prophesies of a prophet who will be like him but greater. The N.T. refers to the prophets, beginning with Samuel. They end with Zechariah, or, if we will, Malachi. In the N.T. it is John who is the prophet of

renown, for he is 'greater than a prophet'. Yet Jesus is 'greater than greater than a prophet', for he is the one to whom Moses and John both refer. There are of course prophets whose line springs from the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Given in all this, is being a prophet a functional part of man? Does he lose his identity when he fails to fulfil a prophetic role? The answer is, 'Yes and no.' If we understand (cf. Exodus 7:1f) the prophetic ministry as being the voice and proclamation of God then, without doubt, all men should be His mouthpieces. They should know what He has said. If we mean the specialised proclamation of that then not all are prophets. Prophecy of course is both forthtelling and foretelling. All men participate in the former, whilst the appointed prophet shares in the latter.

In the O.T. only certain persons within Israel were appointed priests, yet the whole nation was a priest-nation (Exodus 19: 5-6). Israel was to be the prophetic nation to the other nations, yet only specified persons were appointed prophets. In this sense then all men should participate in prophecy. Certainly all should respond to it. All should recognise the voice of God and obey, whatever the media by which He may choose to utter that voice. The prophet not only informs men of the mind of God, but he tells the intentions of God. This is what we mean by forthtelling and foretelling.

All God's People are Prophets

In the O.T. it is patent that not all God's people are prophets. Only some have that office. Yet at Pentecost Joel 2: 28ff is quoted as a rationale of the strange happening which was the Spirit's coming. 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days," says the Lord, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall

see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy until that great and terrible day of the Lord comes... "‘.

A close examination of the passage will adduce the following:- ‘The explanation of Pentecost is that the Spirit has come for this era, i.e. for these last days which begin at Pentecost and finish at the Day of the Lord. The interim between these two points will be a time of prophecy for all God’s people. The anointing of the Spirit will not be confined to special persons as in the O.T., eg. prophets and similar servants. The whole community will be the prophetic community.’⁵

When we ask, ‘How is all the community prophetic?’ then the answer is that ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (Rev 19: 10). Of course *witness* and *testimony* are the one, whether in the verbal or nounal forms. In Acts 1:8 Jesus had said,

⁵ ‘According to Acts. 2: 4; 4:31 all are filled with the prophetic Spirit and according to Acts. 2: 16ff. it is a specific mark of the age of fulfilment that the Spirit does not only lay hold of individuals but that all members of the eschatological community without distinction are called to prophesy. In Corinth there was obviously a greater number of prophets, for those who spoke at divine service had to be limited to two or three, I C.14:29. In spite of this, Paul urges the Corinthians to strive after the *charisma* of prophecy, I C. 14:1,5,12,39. It is not a gift for the chosen few. It can be imparted to any man even though in practice it may be limited to a comparatively small circle.’ (*Theological Dictionary of the N.T.*, Ed. G.Kittel, Vol VI, p.849, Eerdmans, G.R.) We understand then that the ministry of prophecy is available to all, and indeed all should seek this ministry. However the whole community is in any case committed to prophetic ministry as we have outlined above.

‘You will receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you will be my witnesses (witness to me), in Jerusalem and all Judea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.’ He meant that their testimony would be him, not only his past works and their meaning, but the very action and expression of his current works, i.e. his current testimony.

How Can All be Prophets?

It is one thing to say that all God’s people are in prophetic ministry and another to say they are all prophets. The prophetic ministry is sharing the whole utterance of God, i.e. His word or ‘the word of Christ’ (Rom 10: 17). This prophetic ministry embraces apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. It also embraces all the charismata, and all ministries. In particular there are prophets in the N.T., such as Agabus, Silas, Judas, etc. Again there were those who exercised the charisma of prophecy. It is doubtful that such were themselves prophets, although this of course has been strongly debated.

When however we come to the Book of the Revelation, we have those who *have* or *hold* or who *bear* the testimony of Jesus. We read of them in 1: 2, 9, 12:11, 17, 18:24, 19:10, cf. 6:9–11, 13:15. Thus all are in ‘the testimony of Jesus’, and this accords, again, with Acts 1: 8. All will bear his witness. Hence the ministry is generally prophetic, partially prophetic in the charismatic sense and wholly prophetic in the office of a prophet. When we say ‘wholly’ we do not mean that the community does not bear witness wholly, but we mean the office of a prophet is specific.

Prophecy and Identity

If we apply our rule that our true identity is

retaining our integrity and responding to the general and special gifts God has given to us, then is prophecy an element of our functional being, especially as we are created? The answer is that because of the Fall, and consequent redemption we have both the identity given in creation, and then the further elements given in redemption. Doubtless it is native to creation for man to share God's utterance to His creation, and when that takes on exhortation, warnings of judgement, and the declaration of God's grace because it is needed, then the prophetic element is rightly a part of our true identity.

Further to this we know that God had planned all things before He created, and so redemption is not an expedient to meet a contingency, i.e. the contingency of man's sin and Satan's rebellion. This, we must say, is all incorporated in God's original plan. Hence prophecy is God's original provision for history.

Prophecy and Persecution

Jesus made it clear that the prophets have always been persecuted. This is because of their hortatory and predictive ministry, a ministry which man dislikes. Jesus 'said that the blood of the prophets had been shed from Abel to Zechariah. John's blood was also spilled. Likewise that of Jesus. He said that the leaders of Israel built tombs for the prophets but went on destroying them. He said he must go to Jerusalem for it was not possible that a prophet should perish outside it.

The prophetic ministry, because it is direct confrontation, because it is the very voice of God through His special servant, must always be hated. In the Book of the Revelation this obtains. All who have prophetic ministry are persecuted. We take it that the martyrs were such. They held the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. They refused the mark of the beast, and instead displayed the mark of God, written

on their foreheads.

We now see that one of the reasons man does not retain his integrity and does not insist on his true identity is that that identity is linked with God, its very Giver— To retain one's true identity is to invite the hatred and persecution of evil men and powers.

Who then truly seeks to know his identity? Is much of our so-called search for identity really an endeavour to confuse the issues, and to hide what God has given us and camouflage what God has made us? Is it in fact not a search for our true identity, but rather an endeavour to escape it?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Our Identity as Creatures

Jeremiah 10:23 says, ‘The way of a man is not in himself. It is not in a man to direct his own footsteps.’ Proverbs adds, ‘A man’s steps are ordered by the Lord: *how then can a man understand his ways?*’ This means that man cannot be an autonomous creature. He cannot be self-sufficient.⁶ What then

⁶ We have seen that the way of a man is not in himself, i.e. man cannot be self-sufficient. We might be excused for thinking that the believer, having surrendered his sinful autonomy, might now have powers beyond those within sinfulness, and even beyond what is creatorial. Paul keeps emphasising *the essential weakness of the believer*. This is graphically seen in Romans 7: 13–25. Man, of himself, is not more powerful than sin, of itself. In II Corinthians 3:4–6 Paul says, ‘Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.’ It is evident, then, that we are strong only in dependence (Phil 4:13, Rom 8:36–37). Paul’s greatest exposition of man’s innate weakness and God’s assisting grace in that weakness is found in II Corinthians 12: 1–10. Here Paul actually glories in his creaturely weakness. He warns against pride in self-achievement, as indeed he warns us in the words of I Corinthians 10: 12–13.

do we mean by the term ‘creature’? We mean that God is Creator, and what He creates – man – is essentially dependent upon Him to be man. His identity is contingent upon God. When he moves out of that dependency he forfeits true creatureliness.

Some theologians suggest that man is frustrated by his finiteness. Actually the term ‘finite’ is not so much a Biblical as a philosophical term. In fact the true manness of man lies in his creaturely character. It is his essential nature. He does not need infiniteness—whatever that would mean to a human person. He does not need to be a creator. All his actions are procreative rather than creative. In this is his true joy, serenity and glory.

God for His part is providential. He upholds the whole creaturely creation. In this sense man ‘lives and moves and has his being’ in God. However man’s death through the Fall means his refusal to be creaturely. He fights for autonomy, and thus denies his essential identity. So he is a lost creature. He takes upon himself the burden of a god. He must make his own decisions. He must judge the universe in which he lives, decide upon his goals (or no-goals), whether short-term or long-term. He must choose the good and the evil, without in-fact knowing what they are essentially. He must come to terms with law and conscience. His task as a non-creaturely creature is a demanding and wearying one.

We have said that his essential need is total fulfilment, especially emotional fulfilment. This, by nature of the case, he cannot have. The man who named all the creatures refuses his own designation as a creature. Sin does not allow humility to the human spirit. Only in humility can man be truly creaturely.

Christ and Man’s Creatureliness

Jesus, in the sermon on the mount, made a recall to creatureliness. He speaks of total dependence upon

God as Father by us who are His children. Man has been on his own, seeking to secure himself in his universe. To a great degree man sees the creation as an entity to be fought. He reads fate in its motions. It is alien to him. He must not let it impinge upon him. Jesus has another message. He says, 'Take no thought for the morrow, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or where-withal you shall be clothed. It is after these things that the Gentiles seek. 'Your heavenly Father knows you have need of them. Seek first His Kingdom and all these things will be added to you.' It is not that we must reject the good creaturely needs of life. It is the way we go about obtaining them that is either the way of (sinful) man, or the way of the Kingdom.

Christ's filial obedience is also his creaturely obedience to God. He says he is 'dependent for his life upon God: 'As the living Father sent me, and I live by (or, because of) the Father, so he who eats me shall live by me' (John 6: 57). This principle of dependency is shown in each petition of the Lord's Prayer. 'Give us this day our daily bread,' is asking for literal bread, but it is also acknowledging man's dependency upon God for all, things which we call temporal and eternal, or material and spiritual.

The Hebrew had this constant sense of his creatureliness. Indeed he gloried in it. Psalm 104 is a magnificent poem on the theme. It shows all creation as waiting upon God for its needs, and God not the grudging Deity. He has given us all things richly to enjoy. All things are created by God and to be enjoyed. At his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Paul reminds the pagans at Lystra, '...he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with 'food and gladness.'

The Dependency Brings Richer Identity

To bite the dust as man must in repentance is a

joyous thing. Paul says that it is the goodness and forbearance and kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Rom 2: 4). The prodigal in the pigsty says, 'How many of my father's servants have *bread enough and to spare*, but I perish here with hunger.' This is the cry of a man who has come to himself, and realises the beneficence of God. All creaturely needs are satisfied in Him, whether they be material or emotional or spiritual. So then repentance brings him back to the *Father-Creator*.

Paul says, 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.' he adds, 'The very things that were old have become new', i.e. renewed. *Creatureliness* is the fresh gift to man through redemption. That is why Paul says in effect, 'What matters is the new creation.' John in his first epistle keeps reiterating the elements which belong to him who has been born again. It is he who loves, who does deeds of righteousness, who does not sin habitually.

This is why Jesus said, 'Except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of heaven.' This is why he said, 'Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot *enter* the Kingdom of heaven.' Hence John says this birth is 'not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*.' This is what Paul calls 'the washing of, regeneration and the renewing of [by] the Holy Spirit.' It takes such a work – a work of depth – to change a creature who has died to God into one who now lives to God (II Cor 5: 14–15).

The Joy of Creatureliness

All of us enjoy what we call 'creaturely comforts'. Indeed all things which relate to the senses bring emotional enjoyment and satisfaction when used properly, i.e. when used functionally. The sheer relief of not having to be a god, but simply a man brings tremendous satisfaction in being human, and not striving

to be superhuman. The perimeters of humanity are immensely enjoyable to a true man, a true woman, a simple person.

This joy is what is necessary to true integrity and the right response to the creatureliness God has given us as a simple gift. To be dependent upon God is enriching. To be dependent upon one another is deeply satisfying. To love and serve other creatures, as to be loved and served by them – this is what aids us in filling out our given identity.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Our Identity as Priests

It seems that from the beginning the head of the family acted as priest of his unit, his clan or tribe. Men built altars and sacrificed to the Most high God. They sought His fellowship, His protection and His good for them and their families. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob exercised this priestly ministry. Long before them Cain and Abel had offered sacrifices. So had Noah.

The principle of acceptance is the heart of sacrifice. Cain's sacrifice was not accepted. Some suggest it was because there was no blood, and that Cain thought his sin could be covered by the fruit of his land. It is clear that primarily Cain's heart was not right. He could be no true priest, no true offerer or suppliant. Years later David said that God did not desire sacrifices and burnt offerings. The true offering was a heart that was broken by its sin and contrite before God. Samuel told the disobedient King Saul, 'To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of [sacrificial] rams.' In other words, true offering can come only from a true heart.

God's People a Kingdom of Priests

In Exodus 19:5–6 we read, 'Now therefore, if you will obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine, and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' This does not mean that

everyone in Israel was given the office of priest, but that Israel collectively was a priest-nation. The words are not intended to mean primarily, 'Each one of you is a priest,' so much as 'You will all have a priestly ministry.' We know it to be a fact that those in the line of Aaron were consecrated to be priests. The thrust of the passage must be, 'Among all the nations you will be the priest nation. When nations look at you they will see you have a priestly ministry. You are thus a holy nation amongst all the nations.'

In some sense Israel must have been intended to represent God to the nations, for the idea is developed in Isaiah 61:6, 'You shall be called the priests of the Lord, men shall speak of you as ministers of our God.' This relates also to Isaiah 62: 12, -'They shall be called The Holy People, the redeemed of the Lord.'

Within Israel all had free access to God, a privilege which other nations did not appear to have. Whilst the cultus meant they must approach God through the priests and the sacrifices, yet each could approach God, so to speak, on his own hearth, and this is probably the reason Israel is called a nation of priests. In the collective sense, as we have said, Israel had some priestly ministry to the nations. Certainly in time those outside Israel came to see the wonderful provision God made for them. It aroused anger in many cases that Israel seemed to be an elitist people, although this was not what God meant by His choice. Being God's chosen people did not mean His *favourite* people.

Household and Kingdom

In Numbers 12:7 we read, ' My servant Moses; he is entrusted with all My house.' The theme of God's household or house or family is throughout Scripture. The tabernacle originally represented God dwelling with His people, hence the term 'house of God'. In fact Israel was God's dwelling place.

In this sense the tabernacle or temple was representative of both the people – 'the tabernacle of the congregation' – and of God since it was His shrine.

It is interesting that this holy place was significant of the holy people as well as of the Holy God. Ezekiel 37 is a chapter which speaks firstly of the renewal of Israel by the Holy Spirit, and secondly of the unifying of all Israel. It closes with the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people, and the signature tune of the Covenant, 'I will be their God and they shall be My People.' This passage parallels that of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21: 1-5. There too God's sanctuary is in, or is, Israel, and He dwells amongst them.

We must not go into too much detail, but look to what happens in the New Testament regarding the people of God and the sanctuary of God. Without doubt the people which are born as a church on the day of Pentecost are the new people of God. They spring primarily from 'Jerusalem and all Judea', but extend to 'Samaria' and then to 'the uttermost part of the earth', i.e. the Gentiles or nations. They are the true household or sanctuary of God. This is seen in Ephesians 2: 11-22. The first step is the abolishing of the enmity between the 'Jews and Gentiles. In Christ, through the Cross, a new humanity is minted, i.e. Jew and Gentile not as an amalgam, but Jew and Gentile melted in the crucible of the Cross and made into one new humanity. Both now have access to the Father. Thus in the N.T. we read of the household of God in Galatians 6: 10, the true Israel of God in Galatians 6: 16, the 'household of God, which is the church of the living God, the bulwark and pillar of the truth.' In Hebrews 3:1-7 we read of the house, and it is 'God's house, Christ being faithful over it as a Son.'

When we come to I Peter 2: 4-10 we have an exposition on the spiritual house and spiritual priesthood, and it is from here we learn what we need to know in regard to our own priesthood. We are living stones

by which the spiritual house (the house of God, the sanctuary and the shrine) is built. Also we are built as living stones into it.

Also ours is a holy and spiritual priesthood, for we now 'offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' Shortly we will see what these sacrifices are and what our spiritual priesthood is. We need at this point to turn to verses 9 and 10 for they are intended to return our thoughts to Exodus 19:5–6. Peter is saying that we, the new people of God' through Calvary, the Resurrection and Pentecost, are the equivalent of Israel, or are the new Israel, or Israel-in-continuity, for Exodus 19:5–6 now applies to them: 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.'

The Priesthood of All Believers

We are aware that during the Reformation period the doctrine grew up which is called 'the priesthood of all believers'. Since all Israel was a priesthood, so now all God's people in Christ are a priesthood of all believers. Notice, however, that the doctrine was not stated, 'The priesthood of every believer.' So we have to take up the subject again. 'Is every believer a priest?' The answer must be, 'Yes and no.' Just as sonship is both personal and collective, and prophetic ministry is personal and collective, so priesthood is personal and collective. No one is a priest unto himself. One may have the office of a prophet, but none has the singular office of a priest. There are no priests in this sense in the New Testament church.

Yet all are as much priests as were all in Israel.

This collective or corporate priesthood must be understood. All and each of us offers spiritual sacrifices. We offer them to God, and we offer them through Jesus Christ. In that sense our priesthood is in Christ the True Priest.

The Priesthood of Christ

Doubtless in referring to our spiritual priesthood Peter in his epistle is likening us to the priesthood of the nation of Israel. We know that the priesthood within Israel was Aaronic or Levitical, because of its origin from the tribe of Levi. At the same time this was a priesthood within the priesthood, a cultus which is peculiar to Israel. Hence when Peter speaks of our priesthood he is speaking of the more collective priesthood of Israel and not the Levitical. This means that when we view the priesthood of Christ, it is likely that our priesthood is not only contained within his (as is our prophethood, as is our sonship and servanthood), but is of the same 'order'.

The writer of Hebrews gives us a magnificent view of Christ's priesthood. He views it as supra-Levitical. It is of another order, indeed after the order of Melchizedek. Whilst we cannot here expand on this we can see that his ministry is not in a mundane sanctuary, but a heavenly sanctuary, and that the order of his sacrifice is beyond that of the ritual of Israel. In fact it is through his ministry of the Cross that he has become the new and living way, having opened that way to us into the very Holy of holies, into the presence of God Himself. One sacrifice has been offered for sins for ever. No other sacrifice is required. It is effective in that all sins have been purged. The same priest – Christ – ever lives to make intercession for us. That is he continues a ministry now which is mediatorial for our safety, protection and maturity, but the redemptive sacrifice has been completed.

Our Priestly Ministry

If we remember the corporate nature of this ministry, and remember that we are not priests in the mundane sense, and that our offerings are spiritual, then we can examine what such really are. Romans 12: 1–2 show that first we must offer ourselves, not as victims who are slain, but as sacrifices which show their quality in the manner of our living. Our bodies are continually an offering.. That **is**, how we use them shows our .true worship. What we do with them in eating, drinking, walking, talking, patterns of life and the like is the outward witness of our worship. It is not only what we do for ourselves, but for others that speaks strongly.

Given the surrender and actions of our bodies are true sacrifice, yet there are spiritual sacrifices which also come through the whole ministry of our persons. We saw in Isaiah 61:6 that there was a prophecy concerning the future when Israel would overtly exercise its ministry of priesthood visa vis the other nations. In Isaiah 66:18–21 there is an eschatological reference to a wider priestly ministry by the people of God, and it is suggested that out of the Gentiles God will take some for priests.

Seeing that Christ's priesthood has forever finished bloody sacrifices, it seems that the eschatological sacrifices must be spiritual. Spiritual, nevertheless, means actual. What then are these actual sacrifices? Hebrews 13:15–16 shows us what they are: 'Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.' We see firstly that the sacrifice is praise, or the fruit of the lips. This means that praise is so fulsome within that it wells up and spills over. This is a quote from Hosea 14: 2, 'We will render the fruit of our lips.' Psalm 50:23 has it, 'He who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice honours Me.'

We have already seen that the true sacrifice is a humbled heart, but then praise must come. It is interesting to note that the early church was always praising God. It could not be silenced (Acts 4:20, 16: 23–25). Note too that in heaven this praise is continually given. In Leviticus 7 we see the thanksgiving offerings (bloodless) which were offered to God.

In Hebrews 13:16 the writer is saying that true sacrifices relate to doing good and sharing what we have. We are reminded of Micah 6:7–8, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' Instead of static sacrifices, it is 'to do good', as Hebrews quotes Micah 6: 8. Also in Hosea 6:6 we have similar words, 'For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings.'

Paul has at least two references to a sacrificial ministry he exercised which is unbloody, and which is not sacerdotal. In Philippians 2:14–18 he speaks of his ministry to his readers, and trusts it will not be in vain. He says, 'Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.' He is firstly saying that the Philippians are offering to God a sacrificial service which springs from faith, and secondly that he seals–this, so to speak, with the libation or drink offering which was rendered in some Jewish and pagan sacrifices. Again, in Philippians 4:18 Paul commends the priestly ministry of his brethren towards him. He says, 'I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a 'sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.' This accords with Hebrews 13: 16, 'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing

to God.’ Then, in Romans 15:16 he says, ‘because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.’ By this he means that he is a servant of Christ to God. His ministry in bringing the Gentiles into the Gospel, and so to God, is a true sacrifice, in this case sanctified by the Holy Spirit. His ministry of proclamation then is a priestly ministry. This affirms the principle that all true ministry is a sacrifice and is therefore in line with Peter’s idea of ‘spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God’.

Notice then that doing good, having compassion, and sharing what we have with others are true spiritual offerings. We could expand this greatly, but what we do know is that this is how the early church acted. Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:8 are typical of the worship of God’s people. As we have said, they were a people of praise.

The Priestly Ministry of Witness

When we move to I Peter 2:9–10 we gather even more of what priestly ministry is. It is to declare the grace and love of God, for Peter says, ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, *that* you *may* declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.’

When we examine the comparisons with what they are now as against what they were, the true nature of priesthood here springs into sight. The *source* of our praise and worship is the elective grace and love of God. Israel could render such praise because God had chosen her of all the nations, and made her a nation of priests and a holy nation. He had liberated

her from the bondage of Egypt. He had set His love upon her when she was undeserving. Now Peter is writing not simply to Jews who have become Christians, but also to Gentiles who were without hope, and now live under grace. Once they were no people, but in accordance with Hosea’s great prophecy (1: 10, cf. Rom 9: 26), they are God’s people. Once they were under judgement but now they have received mercy. Peter is thus saying, ‘Your royal priesthood finds its expression and function in declaring the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. ‘ This, of course, was through Him who was ‘a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel.’ No wonder praise flows from their lips: No wonder they share what they have with others as they seek to do the good God has commanded them! No wonder they offer their bodies as living sacrifices! This, then, is true priestly service. Doubtless man as created was formed to do just this to live his life in goodness, in praise and adoration to God, and to share with the rest of creation the principle, ‘All Thy works praise Thee, O Lord!’

The Priestly Ministry of Intercession

One of the ministries is of course mediatory intercession. Hebrews 5:1 says, ‘For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins ..’ This passage then proceeds to tell us the nature of the high priest, and refers to his intercession. Hebrews 7 speaks more of Christ’s ministry as the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and tells us in verses 20–28 that he is the true high priest. Verse 25 says, ‘Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.’ From these passages we gather that intercession is important.

In the O.T. the high priest bore up the tribes before God, each being on his breast. He interceded for his people.' In the N .T. Christ makes this intercession. His prayer recorded in John 17 has been called his High-Priestly prayer, and so it is. However it is in Romans 8 we are shown that he has risen from the dead and is seated at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for us.

What then does this intercession constitute? Certain hymnology has him 'pleading the blood' with the Father, but this, directly, is unacceptable. The whole passage shows that God is the One Who is for us. He gives His Son for us. He justifies us against the accusations of others, probably evil powers. Since the Father is the Initiator of our salvation, and works all things for our good, it is scarcely likely He has to be wrought upon by His Son on our behalf! It is better then to see Messiah in the light of Isaiah 59: 15–20 where God is the Intercessor, or, better still, the Intervener. If then we see Christ as intervening for us against all evil powers and adverse circumstances, we are surely closer to the truth.

Already in Romans 8:26–27 we see a priestly ministry of the Spirit within us and so *for us*. In heaven Christ also carries on a ministry *above us* (authority), but *for us*. Thus we see intercessory prayer (as in Heb 7:25) is powerful on behalf of God's people. The Son and the Spirit identify with us that we may be kept within their identity.

This, then, makes our intercession of significance. Since all that we do is in him, Christ, then our intercession shares with his on behalf of others. The Spirit also helps us in our weakness. Revelation 5:8 tells us the prayers of the saints are incense within golden bowls kept by the elders. This indicates that true prayer is never lost, and the priestly ministry of intercession deeply significant. Indeed Revelation 8: 1–6 tells us of the impact of that prayer as it is offered through an angel to God. This must mean that intercession is powerful.

Prayer is universal in its coverage. In I Timothy 2:1–4 Paul points out both the goal and effectiveness of intercessions. He says, 'First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' This then is a priestly ministry covering the universe. Then, in particular, the New Testament speaks much of prayer being offered for the people of God. This is seen powerfully in Acts 4: 23ff, where the whole church prays for the persecuted disciples, and in Acts 12: 4ff where the church prays effectively for Peter who was in prison.

However it is intercession for all saints which is so emphasised in the New Testament. In Ephesians 6: 18–20 Paul calls for intercession for all saints, and then requests such prayer for himself. The number of times he makes this request is interesting, but then he constantly assures others – particularly his converts – that he is praying for them. In Colossians 2: 1–3 he tells his readers that although he has never met them face to face, yet he strives mightily in intercession for them.

We conclude then that man, especially believing man, has been given the gift of intercession. It is a priestly gift, and just as both Son and Spirit use their ministry of intercession, so do the people of God.

Identity Amidst the Priesthood

We see, then, that our identity is functionally set within the context of priesthood. We draw from the collective priesthood, as also we contribute within its whole being. Israel was unique in that it had free

worship ,of God, true approach to Him, and grace for its .sins through sacrifice as well as order for its life through law. The new true people of God – still having continuity with the old – has even more freedom, deeper worship, since it worships the Father through the Spirit – and is indeed a holy people, telling out the wonderful works of God. Thus it began this pattern at Pentecost, and thus it is bound to express it forever.

As we will see, there is an eschatological identity for all God's people and uniquely for each person within it. All will belong to the holy people of God, but there is a difference. In Revelation 7:15 they worship Him in the temple, day and night. Much is spoken of this great temple, but in the closing portions of the Revelation the temple has disappeared. In the Holy City something remarkable has happened:

'And I saw no temple in the city, and its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' (Revelation 21: 22–23)

The Temple which once typified the people of God within which was constituted the true worship of God has now dissolved. God and His people are one with Him. There is worship of such degree as to surpass our present understanding. In the union of God and His people is such identity as also to baffle present comprehension, but of its reality there is no doubt.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Our Identity Within and From Kingship

Kingly Priests and Priestly Kings

In Exodus 19:6 God has told Israel He will make them 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. 'A Kingdom of priests' clearly means 'A nation of people who have clear access to God, and who can render Him true worship and be His servants.' I Peter 2: 9–10 applies this promise to the church. The statement is now, 'You are a royal priesthood', and all modern translations state it in this way. What then is a royal priesthood? It must mean an hierarchy of priests who reign.

In Revelation 5: 10, which accords with Revelation 1: 6 ('... made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father...'), the statement is, '...has made them a kingdom, and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.' To reign accords with Revelation 22: 5, '.... and they shall reign for ever.' This idea of reigning is spoken of by Christ. He says to his disciples, '...you will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel'. Kings, of course, judged their people. In Ephesians 2:6 Paul talks of us being seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Ephesians 1:20 speaks of Christ reigning from this point. Again in the Revelation the Father and the Son (God and the Lamb) are seated on the throne. In Revelation 3: 21 Jesus says, 'He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne.' This accords with Revelation 21:7, where God says that the one who

overcomes shall inherit all things, i.e. be over them.

We may conclude then that one cannot be a priest of God without, concurrently, being a king. At the same time, this royalty is collective and corporate, as is the priesthood, and for that matter the sonship and prophethood. In Christ we partake of his kingship, sonship, priesthood and servanthood. We have no autonomous and separate royalty as persons.

Christ's priesthood and kingship are joined in the book of Hebrews where the' priesthood of Melchizedek is a kingly priesthood, or a priestly kingship. In Luke 22:28-30 Jesus tells his disciples that the Kingdom has been assigned to them, and they shall sit on thrones judging Israel, a repetition of Matthew 19: 28, but said in another context. The Kingdom then belongs to the people of God, as Daniel 7: 13ff also affirms. It must mean then that the people of God reign as they are the true ones of the Kingdom of God. Their ruling is a kingly one. The principle of priestly kingship or kingly priesthood is also spoken of in Revelation 20:6 concerning the millennial reign. Here the martyrs 'shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years. '

The point then is established: we reign as priests and kings. Revelation 5:10 can be interpreted as either 'reign' or 'shall reign'. It does not matter which. None of our functions or offices shall be perfect and full until the eschaton. Nevertheless we are fulfilling that function in part now, whether as sons, servants, prophets, priests or kings. In accordance with privilege and responsibility we must realise what we are, and so be honest in our identity.

Created as Kingly

It is self-evident that if man is created in the image of God then he has a royal being. The writer of Ecclesiastes has something of this in mind when he

says, 'You created man upright', i.e. noble, regal. The statement, 'You are gods', does not mean literally that man is a god, and that men are gods as God is God. Jesus used the term in John 10: 34ff. It is a quote from Psalm 82:6f, 'I say, "You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince."' Whatever it means it shows that these gods (so-called) are mortal, as princes indeed are mortal. A reading of the whole psalm shows that the people called gods have a ministry of judgement and of social justice. It does not much matter who they are in particular, but the point is made; men can have high dignity.

The N.T. teaching that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, the place of his ruling, and the statement of Daniel 7:22-27 that the Kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High, and that 'their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them', indicates the royal nature of the saints of God.

We may conclude then that man, given the glory of God in creation, has abdicated his natural royalty for an imagined autonomous kingliness, only to find he has less than nothing. In Christ, however, he is made a kingdom of priests, and even a royal priesthood. This then is another element of man's true identity, and he needs to discover it in depth in the context of a functional obedience. The implications for exercising authority are rich ones. Paul says in Romans 5: 17, 'If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.' He means then that because of justification we reign over sin, for we are not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies, and in Christ we reign over the forces and gifts God has given us, so that we do not allow them to be used by evil powers.

A priestly ministry needs to be accompanied by a ruling ministry, otherwise the priestly ministrations is

vulnerable, unprotected and lacking royal authority. The combination of the two, together with other offices and functions, ensures faithfulness in the use of the gifts, loyalty to the Giver, and so integrity of person, and total identification with God in His actions. This, as we have said many times, is true identity, true personhood.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Identity—Being Fulfilled in Love

The Principle of Identity Through Justification

We can say that in some measure, and in principle, we know how to discover our identity. Man is truly what he is, generically, as he is identified with God. He was this way creationally, and his self-consciousness would have been in innocence, and hence of no danger to him. He would not have felt shame, and so the question of low self-esteem would not have arisen any more than the question of pride.

The Fall, however, altered this situation. Man became self-conscious in the deadly sense of that term. His endeavour for uncontingent self-expression was lethal. Hence the need for justification through the work of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. Since man had no longer to justify himself, he could drop his endeavours to prove himself to others and to himself. The question of low self-esteem dies in the fact of God's justification of sinners. True enough, the Christian person every day is open to the temptations of the old Adamic humanity, i.e. the danger of *hubris*, of self-pride, and renewed attempts to obtain self-worth without faith, and accomplishment apart from justification. So redeemed man must go on living by faith, and not self-endeavour.

Man a Dynamic Creature

Assuming the image of God in man has the elements

of sonship, servanthood, creaturehood, prophethood, priesthood and kingship, man must be a dynamic person. When these gifts are used for man as against God, then they are terrible in their perversion. When used under God and in His service, then they are most beautiful.

By nature of the case man is a creature of three tenses – the past, present and future. He can look back to the truth of creation. He can live in the good of redemption and the love of God. He looks forward to what he will be as also the creation in which he will live. It is clear from the Scriptures which deal with predestination and election, that God had planned history even before it began. Leaving aside the questions of harsh predeterminism and fate, and assuming the loving nature of God, we see that man is a creature of destiny, i.e. the destiny of glory. In other words it is basic to man to live in hope. It is basic to him to know he is not yet fulfilled. Glorification awaits him. Therefore man, whilst having a sense of incompleteness, also has a sense of being fulfilled, and moves forward to the ultimate climax. In that sense he is a becoming person.

Rich as is this hope, he must live in constant faith, faith in the God Who 'having begun a good work in him will complete it right up until the day of Jesus Christ'. So he lives by faith, and faith is composed of a knowledge of the facts, a trust in God, and obedience to His commands, especially in the light of His promises. 'Thus in the present the man in Christ has his true identity in faith and hope. Yet these are never present in their authentic forms without love. Hope is not baseless ('does not make ashamed') because the love of God has already been felt. Thus hope is contingent upon love. So is faith for 'faith works by love'. God is love, and not faith and hope, but their Object. That is why the 'greatest of these is love.'

Current Sanctification: Future Glorification

Someone has said that sanctification experienced is glorification begun, and glorification is sanctification completed. What we do know is that the current problem of every believer is sanctification of life, Romans chapters 5 to 8 runs the gamut of this theme. So many problems have arisen because sanctification has been looked upon as man's endeavour, whereas justification is seen as God's completed work.

This is not true. Justification is a work of God, and so is sanctification. No one should deny the truth that man must respond to God in the work of justification. Justification does not come through faith and repentance as though they were works of man, but the promise of justification evokes the response of repentance and faith, both of which are gifts of God, and not, really, works of man. This being so sanctification must be seen as primarily a work of God. This does not mean that man does not work with God, but even so he works *from* God. God, as in redemption, is the Initiator of the work. That is why when we are told in Philippians 2:12–13 to work out our own salvation, we are also told that it is God Who is working (energising) in us 'to do and to will of His good pleasure', and 'He who has begun a good work in you, [*He*] will go on completing it right up until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Even so, redeemed man may feel out of his depths in the work of sanctification. This will be especially so if he is thinking that its work rests upon him. There will be for him so many signs that he is not succeeding. It is at this point that the redeemed man must know by *faith* that *he is even what he may not appear to be*. In this respect II Corinthians 5:16–17 assists us. Paul says we must judge no one after the flesh. He points to the fact that the Jews did judge Christ after the flesh (*RSV*, 'after a human way of thinking') and *they were wrong!* He says, 'Because

if any man is in Christ he *is* a new creation'. In spite of outward appearance, 'Old things have passed away. Behold: They have become new.'

We are saying then that *man knows his true identity in salvation and sanctification by faith*. Otherwise he will misread his identity. With any failure in sanctification or proclamation he may feel inferior, wrong, and misplaced. Yet this is not really how he is. There is no condemnation if he is in Christ. He *is* a new creature, and he had better believe it.' By faith he must see himself in the categories of son, servant, creature, prophet, priest and king. That is affirming the great grace of God and his dependency upon the same God. Because so many are oriented towards self-justifying performance and goal-success they fear lest bad performance and/or the non-reaching of goals should in any way disqualify them. This is not so. It only seems so to do. God's grace and love do not operate because we are successes but so that we do not have to be cast down by failure. Perhaps this is why, after the desperate passage of Romans 7:13-25 Paul says, 'There is now therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.'

Sanctification and Maturity

Some confusion comes because certain persons identify perfection with sanctification, and perfection with flawlessness. For the most part, in the N.T. the word *perfection* means fullness, completion, maturation, and in some cases, glorification. Knowledge as such is neither maturity nor sanctification. In I Corinthians 8:1 Paul says that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Wisdom in the Scriptures, whilst relating to knowledge, is never merely equated with it. Wisdom is an understanding of the truth as it really is, and the ability to apply that truth where required. This is part of true maturity. Sanctification is God's work within us, enabling us to live a

life of purity and obedience. It is based upon the purging cleansing work of the Cross (cf. Heb 1:3, Titus 3:3-7, I Cor 6:11, Acts 15:8-9, cf. 10:15). Because of this initial radical purging the life of purity and obedience becomes the norm for experiential sanctification. Identity obtains in the constant identification with the Father as sons, with the Lord as subjects, and with the Holy Spirit as Guide and Sanctifier.

Maturity grows out of the life of holiness lived in the liberty of grace. Man does not identify with law as a saving agent, but with the Cross as the daily power for godly living (I Cor 1: 18, Gal 6: 14). He identifies with grace and justification. Maturity progresses in the context of relationships and obedience. The true law is love, and he is gladly under this. The true life of relationships is love, and he grows in these. By reason of constant use he has his senses trained to discern good and evil. As he grows more in faith and less reliant upon feelings, he moves more freely in the identity which is his.

We must continually be aware Of the fact that sanctification is the response of liberated man to the grace and love of God. That response contains within it a hatred of evil, a fear of returning to habitual sin, and the assurance that God is at work to protect him from evil and so aid him in the life of holiness. The reassuring fact is that God has already sanctified him, by plucking him up out of the evil age or aeon (Gal 1: 4), defeating his old predisposition and mores (I Cor 6: 9-11), and setting him within the holy people of God (I Cor 6:11, Acts 15:8-9, 26:18, Rom 15:16, II Thess 2:13, I Peter 1:2).

Being set in the holy people of God (I-Peter 2: 9-10) means that personally he is set within the Fatherhood of God (I Thess 1: 1, II Thess 1: 1, of. John 14: 6), and the Father dwells in him (John 14:23, of. I John 4: 4). Equally he is set within the Lordship of Christ, and Christ dwells in him (John 15:1-11, 14:23, Ephes 1: 7, Gal 2: 20). These things are made to be by

the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16: 12–15, I John 3: 24, 4: 13), and we also are in the Spirit (Rom 8: 9–11). The result of being baptised into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit means we now abide in Them and They in us. That is we are objectively identified with the Father, Son, and Spirit, and so given our true identity. The development, enrichment, and maturing of that identity, is dependent upon our obedience. That is our identity is established when God sanctifies us by placing us within His people and Himself, but the fulfilment of our personal and unique identity is contingent upon our living fully within it. The demanding exercises of holiness in obedience are not a cause for despair or self-condemnation. They are those moral and spiritual exercises by which we grow and mature. By means of them our identity, our true personhood is developed and firmly established.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Special Identity in Eschaton

Hope is the Motivation

It is the ultimate that counts. It is what is in the ultimate that is most significant. It is what we are going to be, and what we will have accomplished that grasps our attention. We are enthralled, or feel dread, with that which will ultimately be. Even short-term goals grip us, and grasp our attention. Hope is a present moving dynamic. The past may dismay or encourage us, but the future is the most powerful dynamic of the time sequence. When we have no object of hope, or our hope is negative because we have no shining goal, then we become hopeless.

What we will be grips our thought and attention. The question then is, 'What shall I be?' To this question God clearly gives His many answers. These for His people are thrilling. For the ungodly they are chilling. Man carries about in himself, secretly and silently, the joy of anticipation or the fear of what might happen. For the Christian there is wonderful hope. 'We rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.' For the unbeliever there is dread: 'Men and women, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage'; 'Fear has torment'; 'Without hope in the world'. The first is the joy of current living in the light of the life to come. The second is existence in bondage because of the grey future, the emptiness of the time to come, the derelict hopelessness of a negative and uninvested climax.

The rich dynamic for true ethics is hope. Time

and again Paul, John, Jude and Peter show that what is to come radically affects what is now, and motivates godliness, true morality, and holiness of life. The accumulating, mounting, ethical riches that a person senses as he grows in maturity and holiness help to compound hope, and so the ethical drive increases. On every score this drive must be understood as springing from, motivated and sustained 'by love. It is God's love which has redeemed, as also it has sanctified. On every score a believing person has experienced the love of God; hence the ethical response.

What's in a Name?

Quite a lot, in fact. A name is intended to convey the nature and character of a person. Books have been written on the names of God. In fact, especially in the O.T., the so-called names are really the term for God or Lord compounded with adjectives. They are richly descriptive in that each gives some aspect of the nature and character of God. In fact there is but one name as such, namely YAHWEH. This name was said to be known only to the High Priest and there was such reverence for God that the name was not named. Terms such as 'the Lord' (Adonai) or Elohim (God or gods) were used freely but then these terms could be used for others than God Himself; hence they are designations rather than names as such.

In the New Testament the terms God (Gk. *Theos*), and Lord (Gk. *Kurlos*) are similarly not names as such, but designations. Of course in both the O.T. and the N.T. the designation does service as a name, since the name carries with it designation, and designation carries the idea of office. However, the personal and intimate expression of the character and nature of God must lie in the name. In this respect Jesus said something of intense importance. He said, 'I have declared Thy name unto them'. He says the

world has not really known Who God is. John has stated, 'No man has seen God at any time. The Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has revealed Him. '

He certainly revealed Him. He said, 'O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee: and these know that Thou hast sent me. I made known to them Thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.' He had of course said, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father.' Our point here, of course, is that he revealed the true name of God - 'Father'. If it be said that this makes the Father unitarian, and takes away the deity of the Son, that is not true. Isaiah gives the true name or names of the Son: 'Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' The Son given is God, and yet is the Father. This sort of description is beyond the literalness of our minds. He said, 'I and the Father are one.' The Holy Spirit is called on the one hand, 'The Spirit of His Son', and on the other, 'The Spirit of your Father'. Whilst it is true that the First Person of the Trinity is called the Father, that does not take away the Son and Spirit from that Fatherhood. If the Son reveals the Father, then so does the Father reveal the Son (John 6:44-46, Matt 11:27).

Our point is made. The name means the character and person, the unique element belonging to the person and none else. When believers are baptised in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, then they are brought in to the very nature and person of God.

We Have a Name

What then of our names, i.e. our peculiar identity? What of the uniqueness of each person created? In John 10 Jesus says that the true shepherd loves

his sheep. He knows each one by name, doubtless in the same way that Adam named the creatures, nominating them by and for their characteristics. In John 10 the shepherd calls his sheep by name, and they know him and respond. Isaiah 49:16 seems to have a reference to God inscribing Israel on the palms of His hands. Nothing could be more intimate and protective. 'None can pluck them out of my Father's hands.'

Doubtless the way we are named is determined by what we are, and the characteristics we have. The very name determines also what we will be, do, and what characteristics we will exercise. This is true of Christ, for God has 'given him a name which is above every name'. He has raised him up above all rule and dominion and power and *every name that is named*, not only in this age, but also in the age to come.' In Revelation the great name is written on his thigh, 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.' His name was written above him on the Cross in jest, yet what was written was true, and it was not merely claimed to be thus, for from that very hour he commenced his reigning over all things – both good and evil. He announced his victory in Hades. He announced his victory on rising from the dead. In the Book of Acts it is that great name which has such power, healing the man at the Gate Beautiful, assisting the apostles in their teaching and acts, and leading the church as its Lord. In the Book of Acts the name of Jesus is used or called upon some 30 times, all in very significant acts and accomplishments. In the Epistles it is at that name that every knee must bow. The name then is not *nominal*. It is dynamic. No wonder the name is seen to have great significance.

In this compulsive search for identity man is surely seeking the uniqueness of his person. He is pleading usefulness and purposefulness and accomplishment in the universe into which he has come. He is crying out for recognition of his true qualities no matter how much he may have betrayed them. If on

the one hand he is unhealthily obsessed with his name, yet he would be a hopeless creature if he cared not. He has a right to search for meaning in life, and especially the meaning of his being a creature within creation. He needs to know himself, as also his vocation, and both are inextricably tied together.

The Name Given to Us

Without going into the full story of naming in the Scriptures we can observe briefly that the name given to man was Adam, i.e. of the earth, and whilst specifically that name was for the first man, it was also a generic name for all mankind, and really included the woman whom Adam named for the reason given in Genesis 3: 20. From that point onwards all names are intended to have significance. Seth is the substitute for Abel. Jacob's name is 'twister' or 'deceiver' which God changes to Israel or 'Prince of God'. So the story continues. Simon is named Peter and so becomes, as someone has said, 'Rocky Johnson', 'The rock, the son of John'. The name of the child born is to be Emmanuel ('God with us'), and in fact is Jesus, i.e. 'Yahweh is Saviour'. Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul. And so on.

When we come to the Book of the Revelation we find the name is most significant. The churches are commended who labour for Christ's name or who stand fast in his name. Those who confess his name, Christ will confess their name before the Father. When it comes to being named, one is either named by the Beast, i.e. bears his name, i.e. his mark, or one has had one's name written in the Lamb's book of life, and bears the name of the Father and the Lamb on his forehead. Judgement is determined by whether one's name is written in the book of life or not. The Song of Moses and the Lamb in 15:3-4 is as follows, 'Great and wonderful are Thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty: Just and true are Thy ways, O King of the

ages: Who shall not fear and glorify Thy name, O Lord? For Thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship Thee, for Thy judgements have been revealed. ‘

However it is the name which we receive which proves so wonderful. In Revelation 2: 12–17 Christ speaks to the church at Pergamum. They have held fast his name (verse 13). In the exhortation (which comes at the close of each of the seven letters) Christ says to this church, ‘To him who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.’ The meaning of this has been greatly and variously conjectured. Some see the stone as a sort of ticket to a special event. Others have other views. Anyone of them may be correct. Some commentators have a simple explanation. Stone stands for durability and permanence. White stands for purity. The name is the name or identity of the person to whom it is given.

Some conjecture that the name is the name of Christ, yet that name is not known. Others suggest that the person of Christ is esoteric, only to be understood in the ultimate. Against this is that God makes plain His secrets (of. I Cor 2: 10ff), as is stated in Deuteronomy 29: 29. Again if the one receiving the stone alone knows the mystery of the name, then only one can receive such whereas it is said that whoever conquers will (each) receive a stone.

It is best then to come down on this meaning that the one who conquers will be given his own name which none really knows except him who has it – that is he *will have revealed to him his true identity*. This is a revelation which can only be made in the ultimate, for that ultimate is the true beginning. To know that name before its time might not prove helpful. It reminds us that God knows His sheep by name. Each has his name, a name not to be confused with another, nor to be repeated in another. Each responds to his

true name. Again Jesus said, ‘In my Father’s house there are *many* mansions (abiding places). I go to prepare a place for you.’ The suggestion is, ‘There are many, i.e. one place each for you.’ Is there also a hint in the word that each place will be unique, for each person is unique? Whilst this may be reading something more into the statement than. is there, it remains a distinct possibility. Does the word ‘prepare’ not carry the weight of thoughtful Consideration and also consideration for each one’s personality? We do know that the Kingdom was *prepared* for the true people of God from before the foundation of the world (Matt 25: 34).

When we come to Revelation 3:12 we have the following promise, ‘He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.’ Notice here that Christ is identifying the conqueror with the temple of God, with God, with the Holy City, and with himself. It is ‘the name of my God’, ‘the city of my God’, and ‘my own new name’. This is the identification of which we speak. When God takes the initiative and identifies us with Himself, His creation, His works and His actions, then *that constitutes our true identity. The strength, depth, and quality of our identity depends upon our response, our willingness to take up the identification, be identified in spirit and obedience.* We cannot have identity in depth unless God initiates it, but when He does then we must respond and act consonant with that calling.

Think of what is contained in the passage of Revelation 3: 12, for it is parallel to 2: 17. To receive the results of His identification with us, His identifying us with Himself, and our response to Him is what is written on the little white stone. We will know what we have been called to be and to do, what we have done, and so what is our true identity. This is what

is so thrilling. It is to this goal man moves. Doubtless when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, but even so the God of grace says, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*'

This then is the goal of our endeavours, the future which beckons us on, and motivates us into the present to be what we are becoming. It is true that 'We shall be like him', and that each will be 'conformed to the image of His Son'; but that does not mean we shall be homogenised, all monochrome, static with the same likeness. Our characters will be like his, rich with the harvest of the Spirit, but our personalities and identities will all differ, a great tribute to the God of variety and diversity. Our unity will be because of, and in, this great diversity and variety.

Every person will make a unique contribution to the glorifying of God by what he is because that is what he has become out of the creative initiative of the Father–Redeemer–Creator:

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Identity in Integrity in Integrity in Identity

What We Are is What We Will Be

We have discovered the basis of our identity, i.e. God's sovereign action in our lives, both for us, and His demands upon, and from us. We cannot have more identity than He has formed for us, but we can, humanly speaking, fall to fill out all that is our potential in God. A reading of such passages as Philippians 3:9–14, II Peter 1:3–11, and I Peter 1:13–17 shows us that we are called to summon every effort to rise richly in our resurrection, or achieve 'an abundant entrance into the Kingdom'. If we sow to the flesh we know what we will reap. If to the Spirit, then again we know what the harvest will be.

To repeat:– God has shaped our personality, our identity, and given us the qualities of character for our development. He has given us assurance in that our names are already written in the Book of Life. We are in the Father's hands. Yet let no man – however much assurance he may have – be presumptuous. We are called on to abide in that identification by which God has identified us, i.e. called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Let us see what we are in Him – insofar as He would have us see – and then let us work that out in the business of life.

The Promises Which Give us Hope and Motivate Us to Fulfil Them

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we see seven

promises which are also, at the same time, exhortations. They are as follows:

- 2:7, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'
- 2: 11, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.'
- 2: 17, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.'
- 2:26–28, 'He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; and I will give him the morning star.'
- 3: 5, 'He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.'
- 3: 12, 'He who conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.'
- 3:21, 'He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne.'

To these we may add Revelation 21:7:–

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

Then by contrast we have Revelation 21: 8, '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.'

Nor are these all the promises and exhortations with a view to the future. Let us look at the following: –

- II Peter 3: 11–14, 'Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.'
- Jude 20–23, 'But you beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And convince some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.'

We could multiply such Scriptures, most of which are encouraging and rich in exhortation, others which speak of a negative end, one quite chilling. Others are simply sad, such as the passage of I Corinthians 3: 10–15 where 'Paul agrees that some who are fleshly will be saved no doubt, but 'as by fire', i.e. their works which they pursued – even perhaps with enthusiasm will prove fruitless and will be burned in the test of God's eternal fire. Again in II Corinthians 5:10 Paul says, 'We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ *to receive back the things done in the body, whether good or bad.*' This is of course the principle of losses and rewards, so clearly outlined in Scripture. Paul is not talking of a judgement which is penal and which relates to eternal life or eternal death, but rather one which designates losses or rewards.

We should not be deceived by current scorn against rewards as though they were a form of bribery. Far from it. Our reward will be what we will be, our losses what we will not be. It will be fullness of identity, i.e. identity filled out, or lessness of identity, i.e. the identity we have not filled out. No wonder John says, 'See to it that you lose not your full reward.' The rewards promised above, especially in the book of the Revelation, are too beautiful and noble to be easily discarded.

We Can be Conquerors

There is much chicken-heartedness around the churches. Let us be honest. There is a seeming humility that is an excuse for not conquering. 'We have no power to do anything,' say some, and they are right and wrong, both at the one time. As Paul points out, 'We have no power of ourselves to do anything, but our sufficiency is of God.' We are powerless of *ourselves*, but we 'can do all things in Christ'. 'We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.' That is why Paul can say, 'Quit you like men: be strong'. Paul warns us on the one hand not to think we stand of *ourselves*, but on the other avers that he is striving towards the goal for the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He wants to have a rich resurrection, not a mediocre one (cf. Phil 4:13, Rom 8:36-37, I Cor 16:13, Phil 3:10-14).

The writer of Hebrews lists the men and women of faith who pressed on regardless of adverse circumstances, opposition and persecution. He speaks of Noah being warned of events as yet unseen, pressing on through the dynamic of the prophetic. He speaks of Abraham seeing a city to come, whose builder and maker is God, and the incentive to him of the prophetic, the numberless descendants promised to him. Of Moses he says, '.... for he endured as seeing Him Who

is invisible.' Look then at the writer's summary of the men and women of faith who pressed on, 'who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated – of whom the world was not worthy – wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.' (Heb 11: 33-38.)

The writer adds, 'And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.' He is saying that the point of time (or eternity) will come simultaneously for all, the time when God will fulfil all His people, bringing them to their destiny He had planned in love before the creation of all things (cf. Ephes 1:3-7, I Cor 2:6-10, II Tim 1:9).

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Way of Continuing Integrity

Let Us Keep Faith with Ourselves

This is really saying, 'Let us keep faith with God.' It means, 'Let us keep faith with His plan for us within the full purpose He has for His creation, and so for His own glory.' We need not see the plan for His own glorification as in any way selfish. When God glorifies Himself, i.e. reveals Who and What He is, then man shares in that glory for he is its reflection, and because God has willed, its expression. The infinite variety He has put into His image in man is incomprehensible. There is more than enough for all to share:

To keep faith then with God and oneself is really keeping one's integrity. More than this a human being does not have to do. No more than this is required of him. Keeping integrity is at once noble and pedestrian. Each day he must work at the minutae as well as at the grand things. He must rise to glorious heights but be patient and faithful in the small and even-mundane. This is simply being faithful and persistent in all things. It is out of this integrity that true character grows. Sometimes that character may not seem magnificent or grand, but it will be true, and in the ultimate, most noble.

The Way of Integrity

When we say 'Keeping faith with ourselves,' we

mean being what God has created us to be. In Ephesians 2: 10, Paul says, 'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them .' Hence we see we must be what He has planned us to be, and do those things planned for us to do. Again, in I Thessalonians 4:7 Paul says, 'For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness.' This accords with I Peter 1: 15, 'But as He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.' Again Paul says, '.....lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called'. This is the principle of life for us, 'Walk in character with the calling and vocation which is yours.'

We have seen what that calling is, both creationally and redemptionally, namely, (i) As sons, (ii) As creatures, (iii) As servants, (iv) As prophets, (v) As priests, and (vi) As kings. We do not need to repeat the things we have said about the gifts and offices of man in nature and grace, but we do need to see they are of the one piece. We have seen that the Son of God constitutes the archetypal or fontal Sonship, Creature (as incarnate), Servant, Prophet, Priest and King. We have also observed that these offices come together in the one. For example in Hebrews 1:3-13 the Son is the King. In Hebrews 5: 5-10 the Son is the Priest. In Hebrews 10:5-7 this same Son is the Servant. He is the true Prophet in Acts 3: 20-24, yet in general the prophets are always known as servants, and Jesus personally is called Servant in Acts 4: 30, along with the other servants in the prophetic community. Likewise we can trace these offices for his people coming together as they serve as sons, priests and prophets. They too are to 'reign in life by one Christ Jesus,' and be a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood. They are to serve by their priestly spiritual sacrifices which incorporate praise and worship to God, the sacrifices of the hearts spilling over as 'the fruit of the lips'. They are to do good, to care for all men, and to proclaim

the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. They are to tell all the wonderful works of God.

In other words, *true integrity is being what we are, and doing what we are called to be and to do*. It is as simple as that, and as demanding. Whilst the vision glorious (so to speak) is always before us, our life is not grandiose. It is filled with doing small things, the present demanding things. It is by no means all ecstasy. Indeed often there is little enough of that. It is being honest and obedient to what we know we must be and do, as the Scriptures inform and command and encourage us. There are times when we rise on wings and soar aloft, but that is scarcely the point. We must walk in the light we have, and live according to the knowledge given to us, and the wisdom we learn in our pilgrimage.

Integrity is Preparation for Eternal Integrity

Christ once said that if we did not show forth the light we have by obedience to its precepts then we would lose it. In fact we would only have thought we had had it. 'From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he seemed to have' (Luke 8: 16–18). This is a warning against infidelity, incredulity, and disobedience. We only know what we know, as we obey it. As we go we know, and as we know we go: this is the order of true integrity. However it is not integrity for its own sake but for God's sake. To fulfil ourselves for our own sake is certainly selfish, but to fulfil ourselves for the sake of God and His creation makes it another pursuit.

Man's search for identity, today, is a self-conscious search. Self-consciousness in that sense is a self-defeating exercise. Commentators have observed that in the writings of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf where the writers used the 'stream of thought' technique to build up characterisations, the problem lay

in the fact that true self (whether good or bad) can only be expressed outside of self-consciousness and self-introspection. The thought which turns in upon thought alters the nature of that inner thinking. It becomes thinking observed by thinking. Likewise this principle obtains for all living. Paul could say, 'I do not judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.' Paul refuses to turn in on himself, for he knows the dangers of introspection. He is more interested in the objective truths of the faith. In II Corinthians 5:16–17 he lays down the principle, 'Don't judge anyone after the flesh. We made that mistake with Christ. Don't judge anyone, because if any man is in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away. Behold, they have become new!' He is really saying, 'As sinful human beings our judgements are open to much error. It is better to take the objective fact of a man being a new creation *no matter how much things may appear to be to the contrary.*'

This, of course, does not mean there is no place for self-examination. In II Corinthians 13: 5, Paul says, 'Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realise that Jesus Christ is in you? – unless indeed you fail to meet the test!' Notice, however, that the test is objective. It is not a test of *what* we are, but *where* we are. Another objective examination is stated in I Corinthians 11: 27–32, 'Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgement upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened, so that we may not be condemned along

with the world.’ This demands thoughtful meditation: ‘If we judged ourselves truly we should not be judged.’ Further to these two statements Paul says in Galatians 6:4, ‘But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his ‘neighbour.’ It can be seen then that believing man may test himself against objective levels or demands of God and so know whether he is keeping faith with God and himself, or not.

We commenced this section with the thought that keeping our integrity now is the best preparation for our life in eternity. We mean that when man lives in his true context, in his life of identification with God, then he becomes better fitted. Habituation in relationship with God and man, and practice in living as a son, creature, servant, prophet, priest and king with like brethren is what helps in determining the future life we shall live. He that has this hope in himself, works towards being what he will ultimately be; that is the principle.

Finding and Knowing Our Ultimate Identity

To go back to Revelation 2:17 and 3:12 is to see that God reveals our identity in the eschaton, that very identity which is for the eschaton. The name He gave us from the womb (Isa 49: 1, ‘The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother He named my name’) will now be revealed. The name (i.e. character, reputation, vocation and authority) we were given by our parents or other persons will be replaced by the name God had given us, and which He will then reveal. In other words, our true identity will be stated. This is wonderful beyond measure, for it will not only be the revelation of our uniqueness, but will tell us what we will be for eternity. We will see what God has been working in us to fulfil His own will and good pleasure for Himself and

Paul tells us we see as in a glass, darkly. He says, ‘Now we know in part. Then we shall know [i.e. God and ourselves] *even as we are known.*’ Notice, however, that this knowledge is when we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:3). Revelation 22:3–5 informs us that the revelation of God shall be in the context of worship, and that they who worship will have the names (identities) of the Father and the Lamb upon their very foreheads. This is identification indeed, the identification which leads to our understanding our true identities. Hence John records,

‘There shall be no more anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall worship Him; they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.’

Here we see the servants worshipping Him, worshipping as children of the Father, and as brethren of the Son. All things have come together in the presence of God, and now the kingship of man is revealed. In the light which has revealed all truth to them they take up that kingship. ‘...and they shall reign forever.’

So ends the quest for identity. So begins the exercise of that identity for all eternity, and through all eternity.

EPILOGUE

A Conclusion Personal Regarding Identity

Wordsworth once said,

‘The world is too much with us.
Getting and spending,
We lay waste our powers.’

Behind his words are the thoughts that man has vocation, and that vocation is important. Man’s powers must be used to the best end. He also sees the temptation to man to accede to trivialities. The poet is echoing Christ who said that in the days of his coming men and women would be doing just this ‘eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.’ Doubtless these matters are of a certain importance, but when they are all that man does then they become fripperies. It is *the* way we eat and drink which shows whether we are of the kingdom of the world or the Kingdom of God. In other words each person is of immense importance, having been born into this ‘world, and having determined how he will live. He either lives to himself, or he lives to God.

We have also seen that the man who lives to ‘himself feels the need, desperately, to find himself. Caught in the slavery of his own will, and the domination of evil, he cannot think clearly. His ideas are awry. He himself is awry in the beautifully functional universe which God has created. Thus he tries especially in these days – to discover who he is. He

uses the disciplines of anthropology, psychology, sociology and the like to discover who man is. He tries to find what man is in particular, and this often leads him to abstract thinking. Curiously enough, whilst trying to find himself he is often evasive of reality. He has interest in what man is in general but evades what he himself is in particular. Some human beings dread being confronted by themselves. They turn their eyes away from that which mirrors them. In fact there are many people who use a mirror as little as possible, so depressed are they about their own form and appearance.

In our studies we have seen that a man’s identity is linked with his context of living. We do not mean that factors external to him determine who and what he is, but that the factors of heredity, environment and circumstances show what a person is by the way in which he faces them. It is difficult not to believe the great doctrines of election and predestination when we probe into the ways in which persons live. Some seem basically negative, and become the objects of heredity, circumstances and environment. They go under them, so to speak. Others battle these elements or use them to develop themselves. For some then – to use the old cliché – these factors are stumbling blocks, whilst to others they are stepping stones to better things. They provide a training situation for character, and the development of worthwhile traits. Yet why one is negative and the other positive is a factor hidden to man’s knowledge. Even so it is a fact of life.

In our prologue we saw that society and the world has always been confusing to man, and that this confusion is compounding in the contemporary scene. We asked whether man could possibly cope with it. Can even Christian man cope with it? The answer must be, ‘Yes:’ The answer must lie in the fact and nature of God. As Creator–Father–Redeemer–King He has provided for all exigencies into which man comes. His first provision is that man may relate to Himself, thus

meeting the functional needs that are human. As created son, servant, and creature he will find fulfilment in the Father–King–Creator. As fallen person he will find his fulfilment in God as Saviour. He will find his vocational needs met in the outworking of the particular vocation God has given him through creation and redemption. He will also find his relational needs in relating to God as Father, Son and Spirit, and to man as his dear neighbour. His familial needs will be met in his being a member of the People of God and the Kingdom of heaven. All of these things will constitute the outworking of his identity. In fact they constitute, also, his identity, for without them he cannot be himself. In one sense he is himself prior to all these things, but then that identity is designed for all these things. In that sense we say they both constitute and fulfil his identity.

The key to identity lies in God Himself. Emotionally a man may relax and ‘be himself’ within the fact and experience of the love of God. Just to live in God’s love is enough for him. In this state he feels no need to know who he is. Where he is proves sufficient for him. Even so that love of God is not merely an emotional matter. It is also a matter of will. He accepts love. He lives in it. He responds in love to both God and man. Of course, as we have seen, love relates to both faith and hope. By faith he knows the reality of God, and in hope he looks to the fulfilment of his personal destiny, as also to the fulfilment of the destiny of the human race, especially the elect people of God. His trust and ease lies in the nature of God.

For our closing thoughts we need to ponder briefly this nature of God. The statement that God is the I AM in the O.T., and in the N.T. that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the One Who Was and Is and Is to Be, provides the information we need. None but God ‘was, and is, and is to come.’ If we look, for example, at the eschatological Beast of the Revelation we find that he is said to be the one who ‘was and is

not...and is to go to perdition’, and ‘who was and is not and is to come.’ Interpreted, these statements must mean that the Beast has had action in the past but is, at present, impotent, although he will cause trouble in the future. However, as he is not immortal his future will be terminated for he will go to perdition.

This inglorious state of the Beast outlines the glorious nature of God. All history has ever been in His hands. He determines the matter of past, present and future. Hence to relate to Him and – by nature and grace – to be one with Him, is to sense one’s identity, and in fact, to know it. Man can rest in the immutable nature of God, and the absolute assurance that His purposes will be fulfilled.

This then leads us to the dynamic factor that God is working in all things for the good of those who love Him. The matters of circumstances, heredity and environment need not enslave or impede us. Not, anyway, in the ultimate. They are elements God uses for effecting His purposes, and in particular His destiny for each one of us. What is thus most powerful is that we *know our destiny. To know one’s destiny is to know one’s identity.*

When we ask, ‘How do we know our destiny?’ the answer must be in two parts, (a) That *generally* we know the matter of glorification, and (b) *particularly* we know what we will be. In I Corinthians 2: 6–10 Paul speaks of that planned glorification. He tells us that what the eye has never seen, the ear never heard, and the heart never conceived, God has prepared for those that love Him. Since this is impossible for us to know within our current humanity, how then can we *now* know what will be? The answer is, ‘God has revealed these things unto us, now, by His Spirit.’ In other words we have an innate knowledge of what we will be, although our current language cannot express what we know. This surely is what John is meaning when he says, ‘You have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things.’ We can,

so to speak, now monitor the things which will be. We know the Home that is being prepared. We know the Way, and we know the Father, through the Son and the Spirit. Indeed we relate now to God Whom we shall see face to face. 'It does not yet *appear* what we shall be, but we know that when we see Him we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'

If we add to this revelation the truth of Revelation 2:17, i.e. that our identity shall be both fixed and revealed to us as and when we overcome in life, then we can claim to have a sense of our real and essential being, related as it is to our ultimate destiny.

Doubtless all these things seem abstract and even a trifle removed from current living, yet this is not the case. We know how powerful in present thinking and action is the goal that has been promised and which now beckons to us.. It is the unconscious knowledge of who and what we are which determines the ways we go about life, and the things we do.

This must mean, then, that no matter what circumstances come upon us, or what factors of heredity and environment confront us, we need not be dismayed. We know that the way of a man is not in himself, and that a man cannot direct his own footsteps. For this reason we can glory in our dependent creatureliness, in our human weakness, knowing that the Father-God Who is over all, through all and in all, will not only preserve, but develop and fulfil that identity He has given us.

In God, then, and at all times, we shall live in the richness and the glory of our given identity.